MAY 1924

Everybody's

FIRST IN FICTION

MAY
1924
25¢

Two Novelettes
By STANLEY OLMSTED
NELIA GARDNER WHITE

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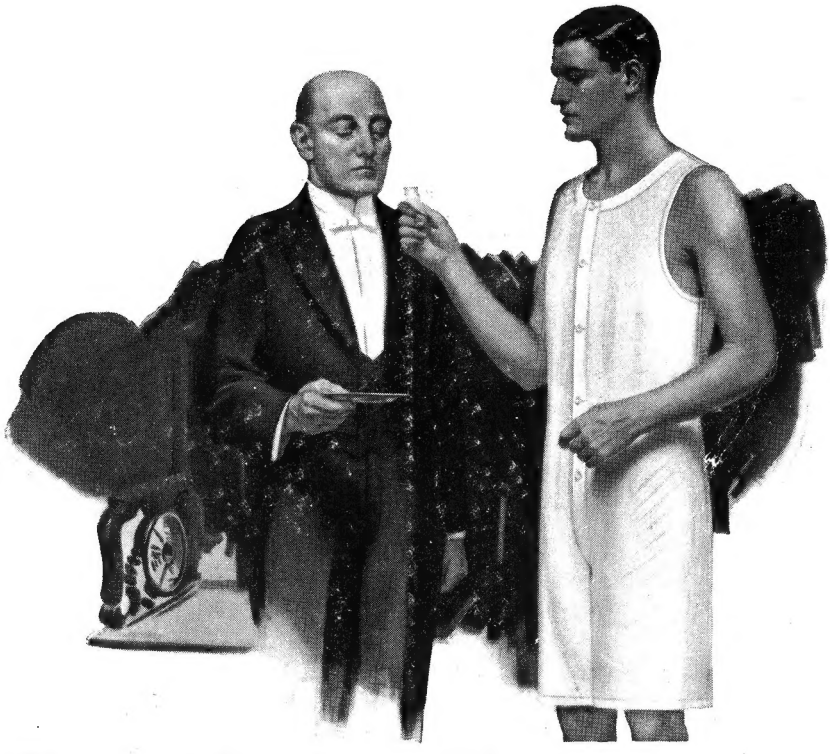
Distinguished Fiction by RAFAEL SABATINI, HONORE WILLSIE MORROW, E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM, BEALE DAVIS, FRANK HELLER, F. H. HICKS, DALE COLLINS, EDWINA LEVIN MACDONALD *and others.*

EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

NUMBER 297



You'll wonder how Topkis can be sold for a dollar

EVEN if you had never heard of Topkis you'd be likely to choose it among any group of athletic union suits.

You'd see, at the first glance, that Topkis has superior quality. And if you didn't know that the price of Topkis is One Dollar, you'd willingly pay twice that much—because even then you'd recognize Topkis as unusual value.

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Men's Shirts and Drawers, 75c per garment. 75c for Boys' Union Suits, Girls' Bloomer Union Suits, and Children's Waist Union Suits.

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Buy Topkis by the Box — Six Union Suits for $6. You'll get complete satisfaction and cut your underwear bills in half.

Write today for free booklet "Comfort from Neck to Knee"

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Ask for TOPKIS Underwear. *Look for the Topkis label.*

TOPKIS

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As soon as you are qualified and ready, the Employment Service of the National Salesmen's Training Association will help you to select and secure a selling position as city or traveling salesman.

Now Free to Every Man Who Will Act at Once

We are not making any extravagant claims about what we will do for you. We don't have to. The records of the real successes for which we are responsible are so overwhelming a testimonial of the fact that any man of average intelligence can become a Master Salesman that we are willing to leave the decision entirely up to you. All of this proof and many important features about Salesmanship are contained in "Modern Salesmanship." It is yours—FREE. Send the coupon for it today. It will show you how you can quickly become a Master Salesman—a big money maker. It will tell you about the National Salesmen's Training Association system of Salesmanship Training that has meant prosperity to so many thousands of men—about the National Demonstration Method that gives you actual experience while studying—and all about the fine opportunities that await you in the selling field. Failure to act may mean that you lose the one big chance of your life to leave forever behind you the low pay of a routine job. It may mean the difference between this and a real success at a big salary. Is it worth 2c to find out? Then, mail this coupon NOW.

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 74-E **Chicago, Illinois**

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 74-E, Chicago, Ill.

I simply want to see the facts. Send me FREE your Book, "Modern Salesmanship," and Proof that I can become a Master Salesman.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Age ..... Occupation .....

Read!

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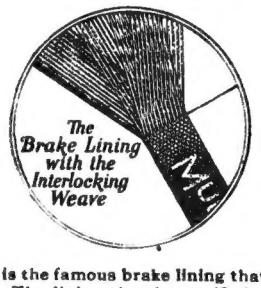

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Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

What Do *You* Call an Opportunity?

IN MY LIFETIME I have heard many men speak of opportunity. I have read some very fine definitions of this wonder-word. It has been the subject of many splendid speeches; authors have written abundantly about it in prose and poetry.

You have said, "I wish I had an opportunity."

But I am wondering what you call an opportunity.

Do you—as so many do—mistakenly associate it with "good fortune" or "good luck"?

Suppose tomorrow you heard of a $10,000 position seeking a man. Could you fill it? If so, it would be an opportunity. If not, it would be no opportunity at all so far as you are concerned. It would be merely a bit of information from which you could not benefit.

Opportunity, I believe, is usually a recognition of worth.

The biggest opportunity that can ever come to you will never be any bigger than your preparation—your worth-whileness.

If you are not worth considering, Opportunity won't give you a thought.

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—*if* you had been prepared.

And I am not one who believes that Opportunity knocks but once.

The hundreds of opportunities which are here to-day will come again tomorrow—

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But you can be sure they will never be found on the door-steps of worthless prospects—men who are not ready.

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Name.....

Present Position.....

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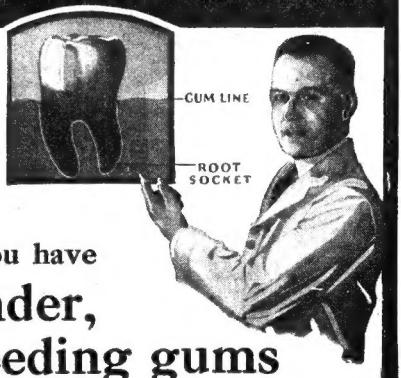
keeps the gums healthy



If you have

tender, bleeding gums

—this free sample will bring relief

TAKE the first step promptly toward arresting those symptoms of pyorrhea. Write for free sample of Pyorrhocide Powder —the dentifrice which dental clinics since 1908 have proved effective in *correcting*, as well as in *preventing*, pyorrhea.

Do not delay. Pyorrhea, unless checked, spreads from the gums to the root sockets which hold your teeth in place. Then the teeth usually loosen and fall out, because their support is weakened.

The soothing effect of Pyorrhocide Powder will prove to you that its regular use aids in correcting bleeding gums. It strengthens tender gums — hardens soft gums. It is medicated with Dentinol, a gum-tissue healing agent used by dentists in the treatment of pyorrhea.

Pyorrhocide Powder has tonic and healing qualities. It helps healthy gums to keep healthy. It keeps the teeth white and clean. Its daily use, with proper dental care, protects you from pyorrhea.

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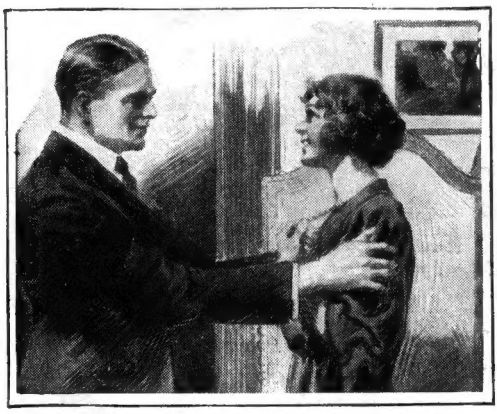

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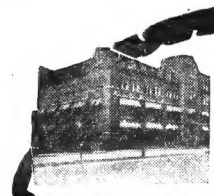

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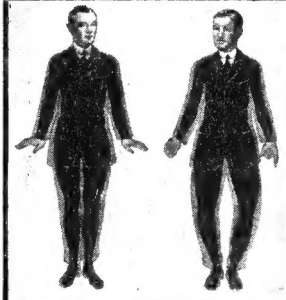

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Everybody's

NUMBER FIVE MAY, 1924 VOLUME FIFTY

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

CONTENTS

TWO NOVELETTES

The Fifteenth Corinthians — STANLEY OLMSTED — 9
Illustrations by JAMES REYNOLDS

At the Sign of the Ash — NELIA GARDNER WHITE — 115
Illustration by SIDNEY H. RIESENBERG

SEVEN SHORT STORIES

The A B C's of P's and Q's — F. H. HICKS — 22
Illustration by JOSEPH A. MATURO

The Kneeling Cupid — RAFAEL SABATINI — 51

The Odyssey of Oliver Jones — DALE COLLINS — 59
Illustration by LESTER RALPH

Mr. Collin's Adventures
III. Becoming a Landlord — FRANK HELLER — 97

A Day's Work — MARY HENKE — 110

The Uncertain Quantity — EDWINA LEVIN MacDONALD — 131

Five-Thirty — CHARLES J. NAYLOR — 172

THREE SERIALS

The Devonshers — HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW — 33
Illustrations by ERNEST FUHR

One-Way Street — BEALE DAVIS — 69
Illustrations by W. G. RATTERMAN

The Wrath to Come — E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM — 141
Illustration by HARLEY E. STIVERS

OTHER FEATURES—Everybody's Chimney Corner, 179; Prose and Worse, by Gridley Adams, 181; Everybody's Chestnut Tree, 183.

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SPRING AND MACDOUGAL STREETS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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Entered as Second-Class Matter, August 16, 1899, at the Post-Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada. Yearly subscription, $2.50, in advance. Single copy, twenty-five cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. No extra postage for Canada.

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Sometimes brides must compromise in the difficult matter of choosing bridesmaids. But Elsie's choice of our charming Sally was a vote for *both* friendship and beauty. And now what has Sally done but catch the bouquet!

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Advertising section continued in rear of book

Everybody's

VOL. 50, NO. 5 MAY, 1924 SEWELL HAGGARD, EDITOR

The Fifteenth Corinthians

Take Care How You Look Down on a Person Whom the World Scorns. The Touching Story of Two Mountain Women and the Part They Played in One Man's Life

By Stanley Olmsted

Author of "Mountain Farmers," "Granny Hooper," etc.

Illustrations by James Reynolds

MARGARET GARNMORE crossed the space of covered flooring between the two rooms of the old Garnmore homestead. Her white-robed figure swayed with the uncertain grope of one but half awakened from midnight sleep. Outstretched fingers felt along the dried moss chinking the log wall at her right. She steadied herself as she stepped down from the loosening planks and felt the damp vigor of earth under her bare feet. It was beaten hard about the ax-hewn beam that formed a step before the house. It seemed packed with damp strength, clayey coolness.

Her hand went to her temple, stroking it.

"Not through my ears—here—here—through my brain—it's through my brain that they whisper to me," she told herself. "They smooth my pillow, and stroke my hair, and whisper to me."

Dimly she moved toward the dip of outjutting knoll which gave anchorage to the dwelling. Tough flat-spreading grass was soaked in dew about the wood pile. The mountains behind the house and the

mountains in front of it were gaunt with blackness. But the service had blossomed in places. Here and there it glimmered like touches of white breath congealed on a vast unlighted window.

A sound of breathing reached her, rhythmical, profound, distinct across the curved doming of the dooryard.

"How sound he sleeps," thought Margaret, "since Mother died! I reckon she cain't talk to *him* unless he's asleep and thinkin' it's a dream. Nearly ever' mornin' he says to me, 'Daughter, I dreamed of yo' maw last night—jist as plain as if she stood thar by my bed.' But she wakes me up to talk to me—they all do—Grandpaw and Granny Garnmore too—and little Benny—and my sister Alma—all of 'em. They talk to me 'cause I can hear 'em through my brain—but it don't make me miss 'em any less. Somehow it don't seem quite fair of 'em. They ought to let me rest—they ought to let me rest!"

The strip of sky that covered Little Snowbird Valley brimmed with moonlight of early April. Below Margaret the fields overflowed with it. The cove at her right was like a weather-blackened gourd that has scooped milk from a crock.

SHE passed down the path to where a giant poplar loomed forward as if to pry with its leverage the granite boulder from which gushed the spring. Clumps of birches and wild cherries not yet in leaf cuddled the log spring-house built across a thread of stream. Outlined against these clustered or towering shadows, Margaret stood wraithlike as the blossoming service-trees.

Again her hands pressed her forehead. "Yes—I hear ye, Maw—I hear ye. Wait jist a little spell—I'll be back to the house d'rectly. But I'm so tired now, Maw—and so feverish. Pappy's a lot of care all day long—he's gettin' so feeble—and nobody's left now to help me hoe the fields and make the garden."

She moistened her palms, holding them flat on the surface of the water Its rock-born clutching coldness was like a caress. Strength came from it, like that of the beaten earth her feet had touched.

And now the sound of her name seemed to come to her, a definite audibility:

"Margaret!"

That was not her mother's voice; nor Alma's; nor little Benny's. When they called, it was as if far away, in a mirage of some tone remembered. Especially little Benny, pleading from the bed: "Sis Mardet—Sis Mardet—oh, let me have a d'ink! *P'ease* let me have a d'ink!"

She had denied him the water because the doctor had warned against it—old Doc Hawshaw, who rode among the mountains on his saddle-bags. They must keep many quilts over Benny, he directed, and keep out the draughts which would also be poison to his fever, and let him have nothing but the powders he tapped out on strips of paper from little phials in his saddle-bag.

Yet little Benny had died, five years before Alma and ten years before their mother, whose grave was now outlined in a hard rectangle where the late winter rains had beaten its loose new mound. All this crystal sweetness bubbling up limitlessly and forever—and all of them had died athirst!

Margaret had urged it upon her mother like a temptress when she fell ailing last October. Cool gourds of it, held close to those tight, shrunken lips. Old Doc Hawshaw had passed to where he could forbid the mercy no longer. A young medical man, camping with a hunting party in the abandoned lumber shacks at the end of the valley, had offered his services and told Margaret things the sick woman deemed rank heresies.

"All the water she can drink and all the fresh air she can breathe," he had said, and Margaret had believed him.

But her mother had refused because she did not believe him and was willing her utmost to live. "Doctor Hawshaw was a good doctor and a good man," she would argue obstinately. "He saw me through all my child-bearin's, and all my children through their whoopin' coughs and chicken poxes and measles. He used to say water was pizen for sick folks."

Her lips which turned from the gourd were baked to brown scales. What heroic resolution must have moved her wasted strength! She had refused the water, fighting in her own way for life, for Margaret's sake. Nobody, not even her aging husband, needed her, she felt, as did the one child still left at home—Margaret who was to have been married the year they conscripted Luke Rives for France. Her

own two living sons were married already, the last one only the year before. They had settled in Peak City, two counties away, down on the railroad.

THINKING on all these things, Margaret plunged her wrists deep in the spring until the long sleeves of her nightgown were drenched to the elbow. Moonlight glanced across the still surface she had rippled. Then all at once it became inky, a blank effacement, like a pool of nothingness. She thought it might be the shadow of a cloud; or maybe of those wings which hovered seeking to shield her from beyond the grave, though they would not let her rest.

"Margaret!"

She heard her name again. It came to her as human speech might come to her, shading to a whisper, huskily.

Dreamily she raised herself erect, and stood stroking the moss on the boulder with her wet hand. "Now I know," she reasoned wearily. "Now I know."

So she had done him injustice, believing him still alive. Could she blame herself? No letters, no message—nothing save the hearsay of his life—worse than the silence which had followed after.

"I hear ye, Luke," she murmured back. "I've waited and waited. I thought ye was alive. I thought ye'd jist plumb forgot."

She shifted her weight from the granite to the leaning poplar. She closed her eyes. When she opened them again she saw him. He stood before her so close the frail hand which strayed hesitantly outward might have touched him. She was sure she understood. Her deathless love for him had broken final barriers. It had reached him, drawing him thither, giving him power of visibility. No weaker antennæ of her body had been able to accomplish that.

He faced the dropping moon, which searched his features. His eyes held dread, and resolution, and the acquiescence of one who has found there is no final sleep. He stepped closer from the slant shadows which had harbored him.

"I don't understand what ye mean, Margaret," he said. "It's me—Luke Rives—all right. But I ain't dead yet—though I 'low as I might as well be as to hide around like this. I'm a hunted man, Margaret. There's folks as thinks I'm a felon. They set bloodhounds on my track."

He stood so still, spoke so nearly soundlessly, she dared not move or answer, lest fumbling rays from the moon pick asunder his tangibility.

"Ye ain't a-howdyin' me, Margaret. I don't blame ye—I reckon enough gossip's got to ye over the creeks and valleys and ridges to make you think I ain't fitten for ye to touch. But I ain't no felon, Margaret. I've circled closter and closter, night by night, jist to git to where ye was and tell ye—I ain't no felon!"

"Luke!"

She tried to reach him and lunged forward, a great dizziness in her head. He caught her with his arms ere she fell; and when her own found strength to uplift, they clasped his neck. She drew her head far back, probing his reality with her gaze.

"Luke—my Luke—come back to me—not as a spirit but in the body! Oh, my dear, my dear!"

HER hair, loosely braided, sagged heavily about the oval disk of her face. He caught a loosened strand of it and held it, screening the sound as he whispered against her cheek:

"Oh, be careful, honey—somebody might hear us. They mustn't take me yet—they mustn't find me till we've had jist a little time together. I've sat hunched in that 'ere spring-house waitin' since before the lights went out up at the house. I expected to have to wait till daylight when you'd be a-gettin' up to fix yo' pappy's breakfast. I don't mind 'em takin' me if I can tell ye everything first—if I can clean my soul to ye first."

"And the soldier's clothes—how they suit ye!" she said, scarcely hearing.

"They was nice and new when we left Coblenz. Now they're all brier-tore and mildewed."

"When you wrote they was sendin' ye home I counted the days and the hours," she said. "Then—I thought ye'd jist forgot."

Seeing how his eyes roved ever to right and left, how he started at the mere snapping of a twig above them, she drew him back inside the spring-house. "Nobody ain't seen or heard us, Luke. Nobody's left home with Pappy but me—my last brother's married and gone, livin' with his wife way down close to Peak City—"

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

"Your brothers is among them that's set on takin' me," he answered. "I don't blame neither of 'em; I deserve their grudge—theirs and yourn—"

"If they was to come back and try to harm ye here, they'd have to harm me too," said the girl.

Her compressed lips were a dark line on the glimmering blur of her face. Through crevices between the logs moonbeams were sifted level. On one side of the milk crocks set in the thread of stream was a flat ledge of outjutting rock whereon they could sit. Because it seemed to him she must be cold he drew off his soldier's coat and buttoned it like a cape about her shoulders.

"Oh, how ragged you are!" she said, her hand straying over his undershirt. It was a thick-woven mixture of wool and cotton, but there were great rents and holes that left his skin naked to her touch.

"And when I came away from Coblenz I was fixed up like a prince," he said. "I had outside shirts to go with these undershirts—my pockets was all bulgin' with the money I'd saved for us to get married on—"

"Don't talk of it now, Luke. You've come back—you've come back! Don't tell me nothin' yet—jist let's rest awhile. You've come back!"

The runnel trickled along the cleft rock at their feet with a sound like wet service blossoms shaken by little winds. It seeped and dripped as they sat speechless, hand clasping hand.

HE HAD no skill in confession, no words to bridge the gaps in his story where shame before her made him dumb. "Don't," she would plead, staying the stammer in his speech. "That part don't matter. I understand—it's jist like you was tryin' to cut sores from your own flesh with a knife that's dull and notched and rusty—you shain't do that, Luke—you shain't—I understand."

All she would not let him say was plain to her. She knew how he had stopped off in Peak City on his way to Little Snowbird Valley, after the ocean voyage. She could picture him alighting from the train, his fine soldier's suit spick and span, his satchel full of laundered underclothes, his pocketbook heavy with the money saved in Germany.

She knew too that where there had been no temptations in that impersonal land over the seas, the new booming mountain town on the railroad had spread a net of seductions beneath his feet.

Here, after more than five years of separation, were the allurements that had called directly to congenital instincts in his blood. At Coblenz he had watched the pageant of life impassively as if it had been a motion-picture film, subtitled in outlandish characters of which he understood never a word. Contented apathy had made patient the routine round of days, running into months and years.

In Peak City, on the other hand, was the intoxication of what seemed myriads of hands, outstretched as if from a time that had faded in daydreams to unreality. In Peak City were the incessant winkings toward the shed behind the house where the quart jars of moonshine were safe hid under the saddle blankets. In Peak City were the "pressing clubs"—cellars under the rear of the box-shaped stores, where breeches and coats were ironed between rattlings of the dice box. In Peak City were buxom hussies from the back of the beyond, who had been to Asheville and learned something of the styles, something of the decorative signaling of rouge and mascaro, yet still spoke the jocose vernacular of sex that Luke would understand. In Peak City was all that would be irresistible when mingled in his veins with the white poison, sipped at first in cleanest comradeliness, leaping out at old ties.

Weeks ago Margaret had heard of Luke's sojourn in Peak City. There had been the rumors from men drifting across Snowbird to one or another of the lumber camps. And there had been the penciled scrawl from her older brother, warning her—almost threatening her—against him.

Luke told her now that when he alighted from the train he had meant to stay only a single day in Peak City before journeying on.

Then one morning he was there no more. Some one told long afterward of having seen him being driven in a dilapidated Ford car at daybreak, up the road that led toward Clingman Dome. Margaret had also heard of that.

Vienna Duke had been at the wheel of the car. That was her name, matching the bloom of her face paint and the purple blue

of her charmeuse skirt piped with orange. Her passenger looked, as the informer put it, "mighty sick—sick enough to die afore they got to wherevers she was drivin' him to."

"An' I reckon that was plumb to hell by the steep trail upwards," some bystander had joked as the account passed from hand to hand on the freshly laid sidewalks.

After that Luke Rives had dropped from sight. Peak City had quickly forgotten him. He had stepped down from the train a hero and had forfeited the local inclination to do him honor before another sun had arisen. These were the things he could not have told Margaret coherently even had they been clear to him; and knowledge and memory in him were, she knew, a bewildered haze shot with puzzled humiliations and remorses.

She let him speak more connectedly when that part was over. She listened to him in the blank darkness after the moon was gone. His slow tired tale was a monotone against the repetitious seep, seep, of the water at their feet. She would never again hear this hushed, furtive trickle without hearing Luke's voice.

"THE fever was on me. I hadn't no notion where I was. Ofttimes when I lay thar, tossin' and delirifyin', I thought I was safe back here ag'in—with you. But she and her mother nussed and tended me the best they knowed how. I reckon gals like Vienna Duke ain't to blame. You know her mother in her day was the same—raised a family of ten children back in that cabin under Clingman Dome and not a child among 'em ever knowed who was its daddy. Vienna's the only one of the ten that's stuck by her. The rest of poor old Liz's children must be scattered so far the Government Census couldn't round 'em up—some of the boys in the penitentiary and some of the girls worse'n that—but nary one's stuck except Vienna.

"They say old Liz Duke was a beauty, too, when she was young. In her day the farm boys and the road workers and the lumber hands beat trails through the mountain-ivy tangles for thirty mile 'round to her cabin—like the spokes of a wheel. But I reckon she wasn't all to blame—her mother before her had raised the same kind of a family over on Gunstick Laurel. They hands it on—from generation to generation.

"Well—whatever might be held agin Vienna and old Liz, they nussed me back to health. I never knowed any doctor to understand the fever better'n Vienna—if it hadn't been for her I'd jist 'a' died in some Peak City hovel or cellar. Whenever I'm inclined to feel hard agin her I always remember that."

Through broken references, stuttering, halting allusions as he talked, Margaret had pieced together already the facts of the deed which made him seem a felon. "It was her that done it, I reckon," she mused. "It was her that set fire to Lish Wiggins' sawmill and timber piles, I reckon."

"Lish Wiggins planned it out with her himself—to get his insurance money. I lay thar on the bed in the corner, sudden wakeful-like and clear in my head, and heard the two of 'em talkin' low outside, close to the wall. I could hear every word they whispered as if they'd poked a speakin' trumpet between the logs. Old Liz was snorin' sound on the bed by the other wall where her and Vienna slept while they nussed me. Lish told Vienna he'd give her half the insurance money if she fired his mill and sawed timber. He reasoned that there wouldn't be no danger about it, bein's it was all his own—and no crime, bein's as insurance companies all had more millions than they could keep track on and cheated folks themselves whenever they could. He told her never to let nobody know—not even old Liz—and swore on his honor he'd pay her half the two thousand he'd collect—fair and square.

"Next night she went out and fired it—in the dead of the dark. She put on my soldier's uniform to do it in. That's where she done wrong, Margaret."

"Where she done wrong? Oh, Luke! It was all so wrong—all—you too, Luke—"

"I didn't feel I had any right to meddle. I never let her know I knowed. I don't think she meant to harm me none. She wore my clothes jist for extry precaution—she thought nobody wouldn't see her nohow.

"IT MUST 'a' been days after that before I felt strong enough to sit up a spell. She and Liz had helped me dress and propped pillers in a chair for me. Then Liz had gone down the holler to cut some holly

and hemlock to brew a tonic for me. Vienna and me was alone.

" 'I'll be a-goin' on in a day or two now, Vienna,' says I.

" 'You'll never know how nigh you come to dyin', Luke,' says she.

" 'I know how nigh I was,' says I, 'and I know all I owe to you and yo' maw—I'll never rest till I've found some way of payin' ye back—some way that's clean and right and fair.'

" 'You don't owe us nothin', Luke,' says she. 'You've made a decent woman of me—it all come to me while you lay ravin' in the Valley of the Shadder—like a big light. I've found a way to get some money—a whole lot—without sellin' myself. I've found a way to take my pore old mother away from here some'eres where nobody won't know us. You've made a decent woman of me, Luke—I'm goin' to live straight. At first I thought I'd try to tempt you to go along with me—it ud be so easy to live straight if I didn't have to give you up. But that way would fail. It ud be tainted——'

" 'And you'll fail at tryin' to be a better woman,' says I, lookin' straight at her, 'if the money you do it with is tainted. Are ye dead sure, Vienna,' says I, 'that ye ain't sold yourself some way or other to get it?'

" 'No!' says she fierce-like. 'That money's to come legal from strangers that's got more'n they know what to do with.'

"I didn't argue with her. I didn't want to make it any harder for her, lettin' her see I knowed what she meant. She thought insurance money was jist big sacks of ill-got gold goin' to waste for lack of use. She never thought a big concern, way off in a city like that, would investigate and suspicion jist like a bookkeeper missin' five cents from his till.

"And she hadn't never dreamt Lish Wiggins would turn treacherous when gossips began to 'low as he might have fired his own little one-horse loggin' camp. He began to do his own talkin' then, round on the Peak City sidewalks. He began to tell ever'body, confidential, about a feller in a soldier's suit who'd been hangin' round Clingman Dome for weeks, livin' off of two women.

"Vienna never got wind of it all till the first day she reckoned I was well enough for her to go down to Peak City. She hadn't left me oncet while I was in any danger—and meal and salt and coffee was runnin' low. She rode the fifteen mile down in her old Ford car. She left the car standin' conspicuous in the middle of the town to make folks think she was stayin' awhile like she often did, and slipped back to warn me—on foot all the way.

"She clomb the miles of back cattle trails through briers and laurel tangles, tearin' her satin skirts and splayin' her white shoes jist to warn me in time. She begged me to go with her and her mother—not because she wanted to tempt me any more but because she was afeard I might die if I set out alone. When we got as far as the railroad track together that night, she begged me again to take the train with 'em—she still had money, she said, and would take me to one of them sanitarium places where I could get all sound and strong. I wouldn't go with 'em, though. I stood back in the shadder while they boarded the night train, then beat it on toward the laurel brush.

"When they arrested Lish he went his own bond and fetched down Jed Blewser from Clingman Dome—a lanky overgrowed boy not much better'n half-witted, but in love with Vienna and resentful-like toward me. Jed was glad enough to swear to seein' me and reco'nizin' me a-firin' the lumber camp in the night. When he got good and goin' he put in all kinds of imaginin's about how drunk I was and how I danced and war-whooped round the flames. All he testified about me's been told me by folks who've give me spells of shelter while I've sneaked and slid my way through the mountains to this spring-house. All the way there's been helpin' hands held out to me. I ain't friendless, Margaret. There's that much proved to comfort me—I ain't friendless."

The listening girl stirred and was still again.

"No, Luke," she said nearly soundlessly. "You ain't friendless, Luke."

Plangent and unseen, the seeping water told off the seconds.

"YOU can climb up the ladder to our gable loft and rest by day," she said, "sweet and shaddery and still. You ain't got back your strength yet. Night-times we can sit together—here."

Luke's head was drooped. She heard him repeat one of her phrases as if for himself; as if he had not heard her:

"Rest—rest—sweet and shaddery and still."

But when her arms sought to mother him he shook himself loose and arose, standing before her in the darkness. She felt rather than saw him bracing his shoulders.

"I've done what I set out to do. I've got to ye and seen ye and told ye. Now I'll turn back. I ain't a hunted man no longer. I'll meet 'em on the way."

"You don't mean—Luke—"

"I'll get a five- to fifteen-year sentence. What does that matter? Your love'll outlast it—and mine. You know how deep I stained myself. Nobody can't escape what they done by jist repentin'. It ain't enough."

"If you tell the straight truth in the Peak City Courthouse jist like you told it to me—they'll believe ye, Luke; you'll walk out a free man."

"You'd be the last to want me to do that, Margaret. Cain't ye see, honey?. I promised Vienna to find some way to pay her back that's right and fair. If I told the truth and convinced 'em, they'd hunt down Vienna like they've been a-huntin' me. You wouldn't want me to do that!"

"No." She opened her fingers and shut them with a futile gesture. "I wouldn't want ye to do that."

"I wouldn't have no conscience about tellin' on Lish Wiggins. He's the real guilty one—he don't deserve no pity. But cain't ye see, honey? I cain't say one word agin him—in court nor out—because of Vienna. She saved my life. You and me wouldn't be together now—but for her."

"I won't say that, Luke. If you'd 'a' died we'd be together now—jist the same. *They* come to me—and I reckon you'd 'a' come too."

"They?" he asked.

"Maw—and Alma—and little Benny. Don't ye know what folks has taken to callin' me round here—hain't nobody said it to ye?"

He hesitated. In sodden days before his illness Vienna had told him that the Garnmore boys were said to have a sister, "gone plumb crazy," that over in Snowbird, where she lived, folks called her "the ghost-seein' gal."

"Maybe I heard," he said. "Maybe it set me dreadin' for a time—I'd sunk so low. But it comforts me now, Margaret. Yes, I'd 'a' found the way here—even if I'd 'a' died."

"We could give it out that ye did die, Luke—then you'd be safe. Who could say ye didn't die? Ever'body's gettin' shy of this place—even my brothers. Cain't ye stay here—jist a little while—jist till you're strong and well—and rest by day in our gable loft—and sit with me here at night—like now? Cain't ye, Luke?"

He said to her: "God knows ye make me falter, Margaret. But I mustn't falter. I must pay my reckonin'. I must keep my promise to pay up Vienna—me that couldn't stick by her—that couldn't help her try to save her soul after she done saved my body."

Through the blur before her eyes she sensed ivory feelers of oncoming dawn.

"Jist for today then! Not even Pappy need know. Jist for today!"

"If I done that I'd stay on and on—and in the end— No, honey—I reckon it's good-by. It mayn't be so long. I'll come back to ye. It mayn't be so long."

He had reached the spring-house door. It had grown light enough for her to see that his gaze was fixed ahead, upward and outward, toward the ridge-tops and the path that would be taken by the sunrise. She made no motion to arise and go to him.

"They'll show ye the way," she said, "in life—or in death. That's why they've been wakin' me up of nights. I see it now—they'll smoothen the way before ye jist like they sometimes smooth my piller. They wanted me to know—I see it now."

"Good-by, Margaret."

"Good-by, Luke."

Framed in the rectangle of the door, she saw his crouched dim-dark outline as he propped himself on his hands to drink from the spring.

WITH the full unfolding of the morning, rain oozed from the mountain-sides. It fell in a pale drizzle with stinging persistent chill. Fingers of Winter, fumbling backward, pushed asunder the aromas of April.

Elijah Garnmore sat in his great split-bottom armchair between the window and the fireplace, conning the pages of his Bible.

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

Margaret came in from the room across the entry, closing the door behind her and latching it carefully against the cold. She bore a shovelful of live coals from those in the stove on which she had cooked their breakfast.

Her father said to her: "There's like to be company afore the day is done."

She was kneeling before the hearth. Clean new flames sprang into being as she fanned the fire with an ash-begrimed turkey-wing.

He said to her: "Yo' maw came to me in a dream last night. She stood by my bed jist as plain as if she was alive. I seemed to make out that she meant there'd be company."

"The company's come and gone," said Margaret.

But she was careful not to raise her voice and her father's hearing was none too acute; growing worse as the days went by. In a way, she was cheating.

"How's that—what d'ye say, my daughter?"

He bent forward, holding his hand cupped behind his ear.

"Nobody won't come today," she evaded.

"It's the same with yo' maw," he said relaxing. "She used to shout at me till I'd say: 'Don't holler so, Mother—I ain't as deaf as all that.' Now when she comes to me in dreams o' nights I cain't be sure of what she says—she speaks so low."

He seemed to forget the drift of it all. He busied himself with his Bible, softly pushing aside leaf after leaf until his forefinger paused at a well-thumbed page.

He began to mumble; then to read aloud, "So also is the resurrection of the dead."

His voice as he read took on a singsong portentousness. His quavery crescendo might easily have been heard through the closed door, as far as the entry or the yard.

> "It is sown in corruption;
> It is raised in incorruption.
> It is sown in dishonor;
> It is raised in glory."

Outside a wind was arising. It had coiled down the gap past the abandoned lumber shacks at the end of the valley, parting the soughing rain. Now it undulated about the homestead with a long sigh, shaking the window casement at the old man's elbow.

The open Bible lay across his knees. His left fist planted itself firmly on a page. His right hand stroked his beard, long and yellowish like stained meerschaum. His figure impeded the range of Margaret's vision as she glanced over her shoulder toward the door. The wind shook it with a sound as if some one had knocked.

She was still kneeling before the fire, but the turkey-wing had sunk listlessly in her hand.

> "It is sown in weakness;
> It is raised in power."

Margaret thought: "I'll read that Scripture place to Luke—when he comes back. They speak them verses at buryin's—but they're meant for the livin'—they're meant for the livin'!"

She listened with new eagerness, knowing the words which were to follow after the phrases about the natural and the spiritual body and the first Adam who was a living body and the last Adam who was a quickening spirit. The message for which she harkened came after that, laving her, inundating her; justifying and explaining:

> "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
> "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."

THE door sagged hesitantly; shuddered lightly in its loose frame and stilled again, with a little clicking sound as if the latch had partially lifted and fallen back.

"There's been somebody a-listenin'," said Elijah Garnmore, closing the Bible but never looking round. "I felt her shadow on the window when she passed. I knowed there'd be company today. Open the door and let her in."

Margaret arose with mechanical obedience. The listener at the door was but the wind; the shadow across the window, a fling of the misty rain. What matter? She would humor an old man's vagary.

Yet with an unaccountable reaction her quiet left her as she touched the latchstring. She turned, pressing against the boards with her shoulders, her fingers groping for the latch behind her to clutch it tight.

"There ain't nobody, Pappy—it'll jist chill off the room! There ain't nobody!"

It seemed to her that she hurled the words

at him; that she half shrieked them. Yet he did not hear. He had reopened his Bible and was pushing the thin leaves aside one after another, here and there scanning a page as it rustled beneath his fingers.

"I must find that place again," he mumbled, talking to himself. "I knowed there'd be company. I must find that place again."

Margaret turned, trembling, and let her stiffening fingers raise the latch. The door fell ajar as she stepped back. Her stare searched the open entry. It was empty.

But this time she could not cheat. She passed through the doorway; dragged herself by sheer force of will as far as the edge of the open flooring, loose with its decay. The yard seemed empty, too. She peered far out, sidewise along the wall and saw the bowed figure of the guest she had all but refused to welcome, cowering away in the windy rain.

The woman had plainly repented the impulse, or lost the courage that had brought her to the Garnmore threshold. She was slinking close to the logs, stooping nearly double as she passed the window. In another instant she would reach the corner and so make her silent escape down the trail behind the chimney.

Well, why not let it end that way—let this unbidden guest crawl away as she had crawled thither with lurking and ambush meet to one of her type and species? It was not yet too late. She had not seen or heard Margaret in her irresolute panic of caution not to be seen or heard herself. Her orange-piped satin skirt, puckered with drenching, ridiculously short and tight, impeded her movements perceptibly.

And even as Margaret fought the aversion that obsessed her like giddiness or nausea she was calling softly:

"Come in—won't ye?"

The grotesque, leggy figure creeping double-bent beneath the window frame went erect and rigid. It seemed to hesitate on the point of actual flight, like some hunted thing that hears the far echo of a shotgun.

"Turn back and come in," said Margaret. "We ain't folks ye need be a-scared of. Turn back and come in—Vienna Duke!"

THERE was a moment during which each of the two women read uncertainty in the eyes of the other. Between them was the chill slant rigidity of rain. She who had been called had turned where she stood, but she moved no step nearer.

"That's my name," she said at last. "I don't know how you knowed it—"

"I don't, neither."

"I ain't afraid. I wasn't tryin' to get away from fear."

"What was the reason then?"

"I heard some Scripture verses. They made me clear in my mind. There wasn't any need for me to stay after I'd heard 'em."

In Margaret's eyes the spark of conscious superiority went dead. "Pappy's found the place again," she said gently. "He'll read 'em through while ye sit and dry yourself. You're all wet. You must be might' nigh wore out."

"I ain't come as far as ye may think," said the other. "I'm at the old lumber camp—not a mile away."

Margaret nodded. "I knowed somebody was thar. I wasn't curious who. I could see the smoke from our lower field. It must be mighty lonesome-like?"

The visitor shrugged. "I'm used to that."

With a sort of twitching defiance she straightened her shoulders and came resolutely forward through the barrier of the outcasting rain. She mounted the hewn-log step to the entry from which Margaret had looked down upon her. Beside her superb height Margaret's figure was wispish.

"I'll come in," she said, "bein's ye insist."

"You ought to 'a' done it the first time ye started to."

"I reckon I mought as well of."

They entered the room together. The fire Margaret had replenished was blazing as if with ardors of ritualistic flame set on an altar.

"I've done found the place again," said Elijah Garnmore when a chair had been placed for the guest.

He began reading in his high, portentous singsong. " 'Awake to righteousness,' " he read, " 'and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.' "

"No, no," interrupted Margaret shrinking, "you didn't read there before, Pappy—it was further on in the chapter!"

She seemed to feel the words falling like stones cast at the other listener.

"Let him go on," said Vienna. "I can stand hearin' the truth."

The gray light beyond the window went suddenly dark. A leaden cloud-mass had concentrated itself over the valley.

"I cain't see the print plain," said Elijah Garnmore. "Ye'll have to light the lamp—"

A clap of thunder cut off his words. Within the moment the misty drizzle altered to a downpour to which was added the furious pounding of hail.

Both women arose to peer through the beaten panes.

"As big as pigeon's eggs," said Vienna.

"I never saw such big hail before," said Margaret.

Their two heads were close together as they bent to watch the storm through the inset of wavy glass.

"How pretty it is," said Vienna, "hard and white and gleamin'! Oncet when I was little, on Clingman Dome, I went out and gathered up a pitcher full and took it in to Mother. I cried because it melted so quick. It didn't last no time!"

"It's always soon over—that's a good thing. It bruises the cattle and scares 'em till it's pitiful. I'm glad you turned back. You'd 'a' been black and blue."

"I wouldn't 'a' minded," said Vienna.

When the harder pounding began to abate they resumed their places before the fire. The downpour was still steady but the light grew clearer. It had all been a soporific to Elijah Garnmore. He was dozing in his chair. Cautiously Margaret detached the Bible from his knees and relaxing hands lest it slide to the floor.

"I'm so glad he sleeps so much," she whispered. "Some day he'll slip out to Mother when he's like this and I won't hardly feel as if he was gone. I'll jist feel he ain't so lonesome-like."

She motioned to Vienna and they tiptoed from the room.

IN THE section of the house beyond the entry was the old board table running the length of the rear wall. Only two plates were set upon it nowadays. There was also the new cooking stove that had been sent to Margaret's mother, the summer before her death, by the oldest married son. Its pipe had been fixed zigzag in the chimney above the abandoned fireplace. In the twilight it outlined a squat gnome, hunched with arm upheld, before the hearth.

Margaret said to Vienna: "Sometimes I close my eyes and see 'em all a-settin' here at meal times jist like they used to."

From the thick shadow of the farthermost corner there sounded a steady *thud-thud-thud*.

Margaret noted it absently:

"Jist listen to that. I never knowed it to hail that some fresh leak didn't break out in this old shinglin'."

She struck a match to look for the sound. She caught one of the big drops on the back of her hand.

"Poor Luke!" she sighed, hardly conscious that she spoke aloud. "Out in all this!"

Had she been watching she might have seen again that twitching erect of Vienna's shoulders which meant one more step in the nearly thwarted purpose that had brought her to this threshold.

"If you mean Luke Rives—"

Margaret went mute as a statue.

"If you mean Luke Rives—he ain't out in it. That's what I come here to tell you—before I got the fear of ye—when ye held the door agin me."

"Luke ain't out in it, ye say!"

MARGARET caught the girl with vise-like grip until she winced with the pain. Beyond two closed doors and the open section of flooring Elijah Garnmore's head drooped more deeply, his stained beard flattened against his chest. The *clut-clut* of the drops on the moss-heavy shingles above him was his lullaby, ever slower and more somnolent; like eternity tapering to nothingness.

Vienna said to Margaret: "He's been at the camp-shack since sunrise. He's all played out."

"You lie, Vienna Duke—you lie! You lie! Luke wouldn't stop nowheres. The house that shelters you ud be the last place he'd stop at!"

Gently Vienna pried the tightening fingers loose. "You'll wake yo' pappy," she soothed. "Wait—wait till you've heard all I come here for."

"If you tell me Luke's stoppin' again with you of his own free will and accord you'll jist be a-lyin'," shrilled Margaret. "There'll be something behind it ye ain't a-tellin'."

"There's lots behind it—I'm here to tell it all."

Dreamily she raised herself erect. "I hear ye, Luke," she murmured back. "I've waited and waited. I thought ye was alive."

Through Margaret's brain the plasm of unheard voices pulsed, stilling its fever. "Be patient," they counseled. "What is sown in weakness may be raised in power. After that which is natural comes that which is spiritual."

Light wavered through the viscid dusk as it thinned and clarified. Unseen above her the day sought egress from its suppression. This woman, this Vienna Duke, notorious in three counties, had but lived her natural being until the spiritual should grow incorruption from the mold of her fashioning. And she, Margaret Garnmore, had twice, nay thrice, cast her will with the forces that held her back.

"WHEN he lay sick with the fever under Clingman Dome," Vienna was saying, "I found your letters tied together in his clothes. Some of 'em was wore thin at the creases—soiled and ready to fall apart. I knowed he must 'a' carried 'em with him all the years he was away, and I hated you worse'n you hate me now."

"I know," said Margaret. "We women's all alike. I understand."

"We ain't alike. That's what your letters showed me. I put 'em back where I'd found 'em inside his coat. But it was branded on me already—the difference between your kind and my kind. When he got well enough to tell me plain he couldn't stay by me even to help me live straight you'd 'a' thought I'd 'a' hated you the more—knowin' as I did that he'd make a bee-line for you as soon as he had the strength. But I didn't. Somehow hate was dead in me. Him and you had brought me that far out of the wallery loam in which I'd been borned.

"But it was still draggin' me back. When I went down to Peak City and heard about Lish Wiggins's lyin' I hadn't the rightness to go to the Courthouse and swear to the truth. I wanted to get my mother away first. I'm all she's got—all she's ever had since she faded and all her children got growed up. Folks always thinks of the two of us together. If they jailed me they'd jail her too—they'd say she was in on anything I done. And you know the North Ca'lina law—the testimony of a woman knowed to be bad-livin' is throwed out of court—except when she makes some confession that damns her. The truth from me wouldn't help to save Mother though she knowed no more about that crime than a sleepin' child."

Margaret asked: "Where did you take her?"

"To Professor Busbee's industrial settlement where they weave the coverlets and make the pottery. Mother's mighty smart at both of 'em. Nobody won't harm her there."

"Why didn't you stay there, too?"

"I jist longed to. But I knowed if I come out here to Snowbird I'd find Luke Rives. I 'lowed as he'd stay here hidin'. So I tromped the ten mile acrost, straight from the railroad to the lumber shacks, and waited. I waited for the right chance to tell him and you he needn't hide. I wrote Lish Wiggins I was comin' back to Peak City and tell about firin' his lumber camp in Luke's soldier clothes. But that's all changed now. Lish has persuaded or paid the insurance company to drop the prosecution.

"I reckon Lish got scared—although he was safe all along. They'd believe my testimony if I swore I done it; but they'd throw out any testimony that drug in a man of Luke's standin'—him with a respected wife and family. I'd made up my mind I'd jist say I done it and tell nothin' more. But I wanted to see Luke first—I wanted to set his mind at rest—and yours—him a-hidin' here like I thought he'd be."

THROUGH Margaret's brain they were whispering. As if from receding heights, luminous, tapering to infinitude, they were whispering of the incorruption that surmounts corruption.

"Luke stood to save you jist the same way," she murmured. "He couldn't tell on Lish without tellin' on you. He'd 'a' never told on you."

"I know—I made that out—before I come here in the rain—this mornin'."

Here was the hardest coil for Margaret. This woman must be speaking the truth. Luke had sought consolation at her cabin—Luke, who had refused her own shelter and protection.

"You made that out—from Luke himself," she faltered.

Abject supplication was in her eyes. Her own flesh fettered her. She felt its burden and the lonesomeness of vanished voices;

like an empty silence where wings have whirred.

Vienna towered above her, looked down upon her with magnificent unconscious compassion. "He won't be there long," she said. "Your two brothers brought him there. When the sheriff turned back they'd kept right on. They met him face to face before daylight. I slipped out on 'em and come here while they was still a-threatenin' —warnin' him they'd shoot him if ever he dared come nigh their sister. They was tellin' him the best thing he could do would be to go away as far as he could git—with me."

Through Margaret's misery there surged sudden exaltation and the urge of sacrifice. She too could free herself from the earthiness which held her. "That's what he must do, Vienna," she cried. "That's what he ought to do! You love him! Your love for him has made you that pure it's me that's tainted in the sight of you. You're his wife already—you was his wife all them days you watched to save his life. That was what turned you good. If he casts you off you'll turn bad again. That's what he owes you—keepin' you good—when you was too proud to ask him to! That's why the chance to pay you back any other way's been denied him."

"There ain't nothin' to pay back. I won't turn bad again—that's all behind me."

Unheeding, the pale ghost-seeing girl keened on. "That's their message to me, Vienna! We'll go to him together now! Come! When I tell him you're his wife already he'll understand. He'll be faithful to his trust—when I tell him. He's been raised in a spiritual body—he'll be faithful—after I've made him see!"

"YOU'RE jist feverish, honey," soothed Vienna. "You'll go to him—but I'll be a-goin' on. I ain't turnin' back. I know the trail ahead of me."

"You was too proud to remind Luke, when you found he didn't remember nothin'—and you've been too proud to tell me—but my brothers knowed—that's why they're threatenin' him now—they knowed!"

Vienna said: "They'll forget that, honey—something will happen to soften their hearts—they'll forget. It wasn't no real marriage—Luke don't remember no more about it than my mother remembers about that timber burnin'. They'll soften, honey. It'll all clear up somehow like this storm's a-clearin' now. The trail's clean washed ahead of me. . . . How quiet yo' pappy keeps! Maybe he'll read that Scripture place ag'in before I start."

She led the way, opening the door that gave upon the entry and then the one across from it into the sleeping and sitting room where they had left the fire on the hearth. Behind her the slight figure of Margaret tottered frail and listless.

"How sound he sleeps!"

VIENNA moved toward the armchair where Elijah Garnmore sat, his head bowed, his stained beard flattened against his breast. There was a sudden odd lurch to his body at the slight jarring of their footsteps on the floor. Vienna was at his side with a swiftness like the pounce of a panther. She caught him, holding him tight in the chair with the grip of her hands. With ear close-pressed above his heart she hearkened a moment. Then, locking her strong arms about his shoulders and under his knees she lifted him as a man would lift a child and carried him to the nearer of the two beds.

Without outcry, with utter numbness, Margaret stood watching her as she straightened the pillow beneath his head and smoothed the rumpled hair above his forehead.

"You go and tell your brothers—and Luke," directed Vienna. "I'll have him all tidied up nice and washed and dressed for buryin' agin I see the four of you comin' up that little path from the spring. Then I'll step out soft behind the house, down the trail through the medders. All I ask of ye, honey, is, don't call me back—don't call me back!"

The A B C's *of* P's *and* Q's

Colonel Steptoe by Means of a Friendly Automobile and an Imaginative Taxi Driver Survives Another Crisis. The Second Story in a Delightful Series

By F. H. Hicks

Author of "Forty Drops"

Illustration by Joseph A. Maturo

IN MID-AFTERNOON, Colonel Cassius Steptoe, late of Blue Grass Hall in Pocahontas County, now of a high hall-room near Union Square, put his head warily out of his door, and listened for sounds of Mrs. Handy, his landlady. He had a wish to slip over to the garage where his sometime chauffeur, Tim Toohey, kept a little brown-and-white taxicab, and where he might borrow a newspaper and read the early racing returns from Belmont Park; but he also had a wish to avoid Mrs. Handy on the way over, for he owed her much rent, and recently her demands for its payment had become importunate. As he could hear no creak of stairs, no sighs, no jingle of keys, he stole into the hallway—a tall, slender old gentleman of about sixty—and began to tiptoe rheumatically down the dark stairway.

"I'd lay ten to one," he muttered, "she don't catch me!"

Ten to one. Such small odds from the Colonel denoted extreme pessimism. But—he reflected—had he bet on a winning "long shot" at the tracks all summer? No. Wasn't his Bourbon bottle empty? Yes. Had he funds to fill it? No. Could he live one more day without fruit from the Bleecker Street peddlers? Yes, just one more day. Was there a market for King Cole Mineral Water Company stock? No! Well, then, how *could* he be his usual optimistic self?

Now — he further reflected — just consider that King Cole stock. Why, when he had retired from "all active economic affairs"—to use his own expression—on his sixtieth birthday in April a year ago, he had expected the sale of King Cole stock to be the fiscal crutch of his old age. Of course, he had Blue Grass Hall then, but this ancestral plantation had become almost revenueless; and anyway, soon after his retirement, Blue Grass Hall had been lost to him, except for the rights in the King Cole mineral springs, through an imbroglio about mortgages. And, too, he had a host of rich kinsmen in Pocahontas County; not to mention a potential income from the "bookies"; but he could hardly regard such fickle supports as crutches. No, he had but the one real crutch—King Cole stock; and now even it was cracking.

He had come to New York last year for the express purpose of marketing King Cole Mineral Water Company stock. At least, so he had told his kinsmen; but one of them, Hugh Steptoe, a cynical lawyer, had charged the Colonel with a craving for Eastern handicaps. In reality the motive of the old gentleman's visit to New York had been mixed. He had college classmates in New York, men of wealth and benevolence; he had felt he could entice them to "bull" the King Cole market. And then, he did like horse races, especially such noted handicaps as were run at the Long Island tracks. Lastly, he had decided that New York, with its many and varied

entertainments, was the ideal place for a gentleman of leisure.

Until this summer, the demand for King Cole stock had been sufficiently brisk to allow the Colonel to dodge all forms of work. One may be sure that he, a very temperate worker always, had been most gratified finally to achieve his lifelong ambition of total abstinence from work. But with summer, when his wealthy friends had quitted New York, his stock certificates, though crisp, colorful, and abundant, were unmarketable. And only a few checks had come from Pocahontas County, in reply to his countless letters; for his kinsmen, contrary to his own opinion, thought it best for him to return South and winter at his rich Cousin Henrietta's farm. Furthermore, he had failed, in every instance, to raise the kinsmanly checks by "plunging" on the races. Yes, it had been a summer far from safe, but not an unhappy summer; for, after all, the Colonel pooh-poohed safety.

ON THE last stair, the Colonel paused, alert for indications of Mrs. Handy. Here was darkness. For it was a rainy September day; the storm doors were closed; and, because of Mrs. Handy's economy, no light burned in the hallway. Also, here was stillness. Reassured, rather disappointed at the flatness of his escape, the Colonel tiptoed silently toward the door. Half-way, he trod upon a something soft, wriggly, that spat forth a volley of startled "Meows!" and enraged "Pshtt! pshtts!" Of high-strung temperament, the Colonel, forgetful of a propensity of the aged Whiskers, Mrs. Handy's cat, for an afternoon nap on the hallway rug, leaped into the air, banged his right foot, the rheumatic one, against the marble hatrack, and himself emitted a piercing "e-yow-e!"

"Who is it? Who is it?" cried Mrs. Handy, from her underground lair. She came hurriedly up the basement stairs, her keys ajingle, turned on the light, and exposed the Colonel, with a face of anguish, hopping about the hallway on his left foot, and holding his right foot in both hands.

"Oh, me! Oh, dearie me!" sighed Mrs. Handy with relief. "How you scairt me! Ah-h-h-h! So, it's the Colonel!" Her manner suddenly changed from skittish to resolute. "I been a-looking for you! Why'd you lock your door yistiddy? I'll have my rent, if you please! Twenty-nine dollars! I want a settling with you! Yes, you, Mr. Colonel!"

It was a Monday, Mrs. Handy's wash-day. She had the sleeves of her gingham dress rolled up over wasted forearms. Her front was protected by a wet rubber apron, with flecks of soap suds on it. She wore wet tan brogans, wrinkled, and several sizes too large for her. Gray, rusty wisps of hair streamed down her weary, lined face. But a look of fiery vigor shone through her horn-rimmed spectacles now. She could take care of herself!

Poor Colonel! By now he had somewhat recovered his aplomb. A change of subject, he decided, was essential. "Won't you be seated, Mrs. Handy? Won't you be seated?" He indicated the hatrack. "No-o-o-o? Mrs. Handy, that Whiskers—if I'm not mistaken—you correct me, please, if I am—that Whiskers is a black cat—a very black cat! By Nez! That means seven years' bad luck! Are you superstitious, Mrs. Handy? I am! Is that Whiskers really a black—"

"Yes, he's a black cat!" snapped Mrs. Handy. "And you know it! Black all over—except the tip of his tail—and that's been chawed off! But none of your soft soap! Twenty-nine dollars! I want a settling with you!"

THE Colonel tried his usual subterfuges. He made a search of his pockets. He would give Mrs. Handy the money tomorrow. He was making a careful study of the racing returns, and though he wasn't betting just now, he might initiate immense, lucrative operations any day. A large check was momentarily expected from Pocahontas County. The final papers on a sale of King Cole stock, that ran into six figures, were now in the hands of his lawyers. In lieu of cash rent, he tendered Mrs. Handy a sheaf of King Cole certificates. He asked the pleasure of her company that night at the movies.

To all of these subterfuges Mrs. Handy coldly, resolutely chanted: "None of your soft soap! Twenty-nine dollars! I want a settling with you! I'll put you out!"

Now the last statement alarmed the Colonel; for never before had he been threatened by Mrs. Handy with ejection;

and he was aware a new landlady would demand of him the impossible—a week's rent in advance. How secure he had felt with Mrs. Handy! Why, not a month ago, he had heard her boast to the envious Mrs. Clabby, the landlady in 40, that "the Colonel comes from very, very good people! He's a good ad for my house!"

But she held no such belief now! With arms akimbo, she blocked the doorway, bending upon the Colonel black looks. He had never seen Mrs. Handy rise to such heights before. Why, he admired her! She put him in mind of something. Something? Ah, he had it!

> Yonder cloud
> That rises upward always higher,
> A looming bastion fringed with fire.

But this was no time for poetry. Dark realism, in the form of a hard, gloomy, insistent landlady, faced him.

"Her wash must have got on her nerves," the Colonel thought. "She can't be so dismal over twenty-nine dollars alone, can she? If she is, I wish above all things I could pay her! And I will—sometime."

"I'll put you out!" Mrs. Handy chanted.

A shudder, caused by a dislike of a scene and a shrinking from the streets, passed over the Colonel's frame. But he was aroused, he was thoughtful; for he knew that some bright scheme must be lighted upon to cheer up Mrs. Handy; and that without the absurd—the payment of the twenty-nine dollars in legal tender here and now; and that—at once! To him came a new subterfuge. He would feign a conversation over the telephone, with an absent, wealthy friend, about a sale of King Cole stock!

"Mrs. Handy," he asked suavely, "have you got two nickels for a dime? I want to call Sam Endress—you've seen his name in the papers—of Endress & Company, the investment bankers, to place a block of King Cole—it'll run into big money! Now don't you worry about your rent! That's a trifle!"

OFF went the light; there was a swish of gingham, the snap of a garter; on came the light; and Mrs. Handy held a large purse, from which she dug up two nickels. Even a landlady has to speculate!

And while she still guarded the doorway, dubious, but abeyant, at this new dodge of the Colonel's, he got Endress & Company over the pay telephone under the stairs. "Colonel Cassius Steptoe speaking. Connect me with Mr. Samuel McK. Endress, please." After a moment, with his back to Mrs. Handy, he put his hand over the mouthpiece, and said: "Hello, Sam! Is that really you? . . . Oh, I'm all right! How're you, Sam? . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . By Nez! Sam, this is a pleasure! This is a—"

To the surprise of the Colonel—a surprise that only great effort kept invisible to Mrs. Handy—the voice of his friend came over the wire. "Hello, Cas! Hello! Hello! Operator! . . . Oh, there you are! What are you up to now, Cas? Ponies gone wrong? . . . Let me have it! I'm in a big hurry—only in town for a short time—but what is it? . . . What is it? . . . Oh, you want to market some King Cole! Come in tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock! No, better make it this afternoon—might get out of town tonight—can't tell! But hurry! How much King Cole for a hundred dollars, Cas?"

"For a hundred dollars?" asked the Colonel loudly, for Mrs. Handy's benefit. "Oh, on that amount, Sam, I'll make you a wholesale price! Say, roughly, a couple of thousand shares! By Nez! I'll be right down, Sam! Give me room, Mrs. Handy!"

She let him out of the door.

"Now, don't you worry, Mrs. Handy, about that dime! For I'm keeping this other nickel for subway fare! And don't you worry, Mrs. Handy, about your rent! That makes a grand total of $29.10! I'll hand it all to you tomorrow!"

She muttered: "If you don't, I'll put you out!"

He limped hurriedly down the stoop, heedless of the September drizzle.

On the corner, near the garage where Tim Toohey kept his taxicab, Colonel Steptoe, with habitual nonchalance, plunged into the maelstrom of the Sixth Avenue traffic. There were a grinding of brakes, a swerving of automobiles, and harsh imprecations hurled at him. He had to make several agile jumps, that brought twinges of pain to his rheumatic foot, but he won to the middle of the street. A passing surface car was in the way of further progress.

At this moment, a small automobile,

with two burly unshaven men in rough working clothes overflowing the front seat, came rattling around a large limousine, in which reposed a fat gentleman of plutocratic appearance, placidly reading a newspaper. The small automobile bore directly down on the Colonel, and brave though he was, he jumped back against the passing surface car, which threw him roughly to the ground. So quickly did the small automobile swerve that it only ran over the Colonel's straw hat; and one of the burly unshaven men was so considerate as to lean out and look back, as his comrade stepped on the accelerator.

AS NOBODY came to pick him up, the Colonel got up himself. He noted the number of the surface car, now so indifferently on its way; it was: one—eight—six—one. And for remembrance, he repeated aloud, with mounting ire, these printable words: "One! Eight! Six! One! 1861! 1861? By Nez! The year the War started—I've got it! By Nez! By Nez! I'll make somebody suffer for this!"

He recovered his muddy cane and sadly crushed hat, after which he took refuge behind an "L" pillar, and felt of himself to discover the extent of his injuries. He had a pain in his back, as though his rheumatism, usually confined to his left hand and right foot, had met diagonally at his backbone. His back was probably broken! Other bones, too! So vivid was his imagination, he felt he was almost falling to pieces! And he was hurt deeply in spirit! Outwardly, he was mud-bespattered; there were globules of mud on his white flowing mustache and white bushy eyebrows and long silky white hair; flakes of mud had gathered in the pits, angles, and wrinkles of his large-arched carmine nose; trickles of mud ran down the deep, pleasant lines of his face; his high-waisted, double-breasted, tight-fitting pongee coat was muddy; and the left knee of his pongee trousers had a jagged, shredded rent. His garish necktie had escaped from his coat front, muddy, flapping wildly in the breeze. But his venturesome gray eyes were not muddy, and they shone with a fierce, avenging light!

He still clutched Mrs. Handy's other nickel in his right hand, and, urged by her threats, he set out again for the Seventh Avenue subway; but a "hunch" that he would never survive the journey to Wall Street turned him back, to limp to the near-by garage for succor from Tim Toohey. Tim was the Colonel's friend, his intermediary with "bookies" and bootleggers, his constant chauffeur when finances warranted; and the wise, cynical Tim felt a protective impulse toward the Colonel, always trying to shield him from the harsh sides of New York life.

Tim, aged about forty, the broadest chauffeur in the profession, was changing a tire on his taxicab. He had a fat, ruddy face, with many little red veins showing through the skin of the cheeks, large blue eyes, and a snubby nose, the whole surmounted by a mop of sandy hair barely restrained by a linen cap.

"Timothy!"

"I'll be dinged!" gaped Tim, at sight of his muddy patron.

"TAKE me home in your taxicab, Timothy! My back's broken!"

Tim got the story of the late disaster from the Colonel; and when he had assured himself that the old gentleman was not seriously hurt, he chided him for recklessness. "It's like I'm always telling you, Colonel! You got to mind your P's and Q's more! Dang it! You'll get it in the neck some day!" A crafty look came into Tim's large blue eyes. "Hop in the taxi, Colonel! You're hurt bad! We'll report this to the cops! There ain't no street car got no right to run over a old gentleman your age! I betcha! Ain't nothing holds up a taxi chauffeur like them things, excepting boys on roller skates! You're hurt bad, Colonel! You oughta get some jack outa this!"

On the way to the traffic cop in slicker and rubber boots at the main cross-town street, Tim, who drove a taxicab by ear, as it were, talked over his shoulder to the Colonel, assuring him of his grave injuries, and further arousing his anger.

"Now, you wait here, Colonel, while I talk to the cop!" said Tim, as he parked his taxicab on a side street. Tim wished to tell the cop a more lurid story of the disaster than the Colonel had related to him; but, as the Colonel had peculiar convictions about certain things, Tim thought it best to propagate his version of the catastrophe out of the Colonel's presence.

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According to Tim, the Colonel had been standing in the middle of the street, between the automobile traffic and the car line, waiting circumspectly for a chance to complete his crossing, when a speeding automobile had forced him onto the car tracks. (Although busy with semaphoric signals, the cop was attentive.) A car was coming along the tracks, still some distance away; and though the Colonel had waved his hands and shouted to the motorman to stop, the brute had deliberately let his car run into the Colonel, and knock him down! Nothing but Providence had decreed he should fall outward instead of in front of the car. The car had hit the poor old man in the back, which was certainly broken, not to mention internal injuries. He was unable to get out of the taxicab!

Meanwhile, a crowd had collected about the Colonel's taxicab, boys, men with portfolios, girls with bobbed hair, and others. One old lady in black mittens gave the Colonel an apple. He was worried about his condition, certain he was dangerously wounded after what Tim Toohey had told him; but the old lady, who stood watching him, working her jaws, on which the Colonel noted little groups of whiskers, made him so restless that, neglectful of his injuries, he got out of the taxicab, and limped to Tim and the cop.

Tim was angry with him for quitting the taxicab—he could see that—but he did not care! He was angry himself!

"THAT damn thing yonder," he shouted at the cop, shaking his cane at the retreating surface car; "that damn number 1861 up the street there—ran right over me—broke my back—I want that car—that motorman—or somebody arrested—never even stopped to see if I was hurt!"

"Hurt yuh much?" asked the cop mildly, getting out his notebook.

"Hurt me? Hurt me?" roared the Colonel. "Look at me! Do you think a street car can run over a man sixty years old without hurting him? By Nez! That's a fine question!"

"Now lookit here, old man," advised the cop sympathetically; "don't yuh get excited. I know what it is to get hurt. I had a rocking-chair tip over backward once up at the flat with me. Keep your temper. What's your name?"

The Colonel gave his name proudly.

"American?" asked the cop, with pencil poised.

"Well! By Nez! By Nez! Well!" the Colonel sputtered. "American? Of course I'm American! My people started this country! By Nez! (Sputters.) What do you think I am? I'm no—"

"Don't yuh get excited," soothed the cop. "Americans is getting scarce in the city here. Where d'yuh live?"

The Colonel gave his address.

The cop shut up his notebook. "All right! I'll make a report of this! You go along home now!"

"Ain't you going to call an ambulance?" asked the Colonel his face suddenly contorted with anguish.

"Now lookit here," said the cop disparagingly; "you don't need no ambulance. You ain't hurt much, or you couldner walked over here. Go get in Tim's taxicab, and he'll take yuh home. It's only two blocks. You call up the street-car company, and they'll send a doctor down. I'll report this to the station house."

Tim drove the Colonel to Mrs. Handy's. "Don't you believe that cop, Colonel! You're hurt bad! But you oughtn't to 'a' got outa the taxi! Never mind, we can still make a play at the street-car doctor!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" gasped Mrs. Handy, when she answered the basement bell, and saw the muddy, wounded Colonel, with Tim's arm about him. Into her eyes came a kindly, motherly look. The Colonel noted it.

"So different from a while ago!" he thought. "It pays to get in trouble!"

Tim was doleful. "He's hurt bad, Mrs. Handy! Get him to bed, and call the doctor—the street-car doctor! He's hurt bad!"

"And look at his pants knee!" pointed Mrs. Handy distractedly. "Oh, my, my! It's all torn!"

"And it's the only pair I've got, Mrs. Handy! Damn that street car! I told you about that Whiskers—that black cat! Can you patch 'em, Mrs. Handy?"

"Oh, me! Oh, dearie me! I don't know!" wailed Mrs. Handy, wringing her soapy hands excitedly. "How did you tear 'em? Oh, my, my! How did you do it? And look! Your knee's all blood!"

"It's broken!" Tim's grief and Mrs. Handy's alarm had reassured the Colonel of

the seriousness of his injuries. "My back's broken, too! Get me to bed, Mrs. Handy, and call the doctor quick—the street-car doctor!"

UP TO the high hall-room, Tim and Mrs. Handy helped the Colonel, who limped heartrendingly, a hand in the middle of his back, and the knotted cane held far before him. His limp, though highly imaginative, was sincere; yet it did have something of the theatrical in it, a sort of mingling of Old Black Joe, Shylock, and Rip van Winkle limps. Enshrouded in his long nightgown, he was laid out on his rickety cot. Mrs. Handy made him take two of her rhubarb pills that she used on all occasions. And then she went to telephone the street-car company.

Tim, as soon as Mrs. Handy had quitted the hall-room, hid the Colonel's racing forms and "dope" sheets. He put the Bourbon bottle, now so empty, out on the fire escape. The torn, muddy trousers were displayed on the radiator, so that the rent was topmost. He formed the crushed hat, the bespattered coat, the muddy collar and neck scarf into a most effective disarray on the foot of the cot. He got splotches of blood from the Colonel's skinned knee on the sheets. A bottle of liniment, that the Colonel used sporadically for his rheumatism, was brought out from a battered suit-case; and Tim anointed the inert old gentleman so thoroughly that the hall-room took on a pungent, training-quarters odor. He was careful not to get any of the mud off the Colonel's face and hands. As a last touch, he put the box of rhubarb pills on the Colonel's chest, and folded his hands below them!

On the wall near the door was a picture of King Cole, the noble, famous, thoroughbred race horse that had belonged to the father of the Colonel in the old, prosperous days. Tim was almost of a mind to remove it. "But, dang it," he thought, "there ain't no disgrace in owning a real race horse!" And he sat down in the only chair to wait for the doctor—the street-car doctor!

As for the Colonel, he was apathetic! Vague thoughts of Mrs. Handy's rent, of a lawn party at Blue Grass Hall years ago, of Sam Endress's probable departure from town tonight, of a street car numbered 1861, of a "long shot" he had made a "killing" on in the winter of 1900 at New Orleans, or perhaps it was 1901, of a shivered knee and backbone, of a rent in his pongee trousers, and his inability to replace them, depressed him. Anger gone, mute, he stared at the ceiling!

The doctor from the street-car company came—stout, middle-aged, efficient, suspicious, smelling of anesthetics—heard the Colonel's story from Tim and Mrs. Handy, and examined him carefully. He was unaffected by Tim's stage setting.

"I ain't never seen him lay stilly like that before," said Mrs. Handy. "He must be hurt bad, doctor! And he comes from very, very good people!"

"SO THE car was moving rapidly and struck him violently in the back," asked the doctor mistrustfully. "Is that the story? Strange! All he's got to show for his terrific concussion is one little blue spot safely above the pelvic region!"

"Oh, my, my!" cried Mrs. Handy, as she rushed from the hall-room; "here I stand gabbling, and my best sheets all this time in the blue water!"

"I find no indications of a fracture," the doctor continued. "As for this little bruise—it don't amount to a hill of beans!"

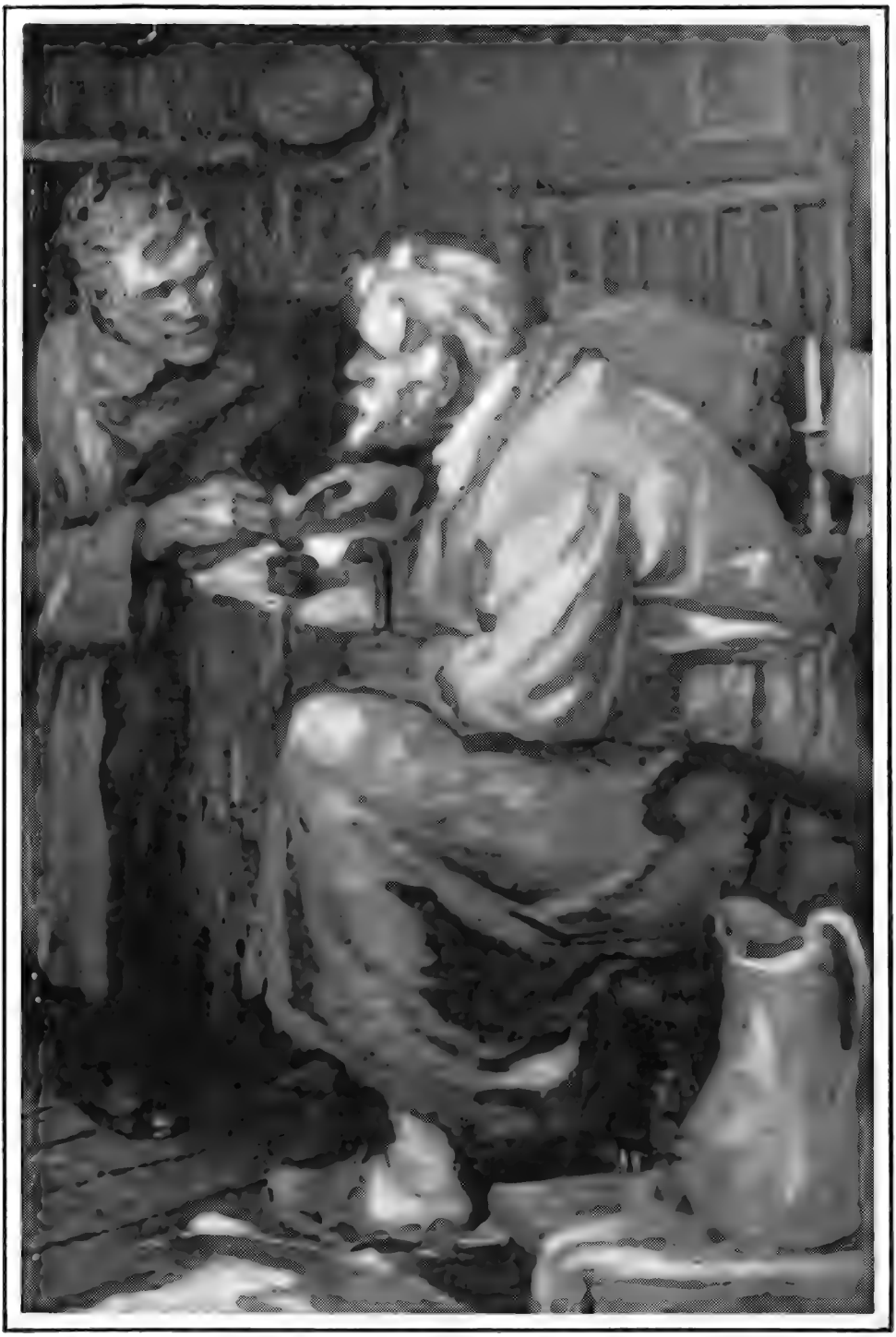
"Look at his pore knee!" Tim encouraged. "Get the blood all over the sheets? He's hurt bad, doctor!"

"I know," said the doctor. "I reckon I've seen all the gore! Only superficial lacerations!" He placed his hand on the Colonel's chest and pressed heavily. He asked, as if expecting the Colonel to answer affirmatively: "Does that hurt?"

Tim, not to be led into a trap, shook his head vigorously at the Colonel, who answered, "No!"

"Well, there's nothing the matter with you then," smiled the doctor. "Got any witnesses?" Tim wished to offer himself, but he felt the Colonel would object. "No? The car was probably crawling along, and the flange brushed your back! That's about what happened! Here's an ointment for your knee. I'll be going now."

As he took up his case to go out the door, the picture of King Cole caught his eye. "As I live, it's King Cole!" he said enthusiastically, hesitating momentarily. "There was some race horse in his day!"



"That's too much money," objected the Colonel magnanimously. "It's more'n I need. It ain't right, either. I don't want to put the bookies out of business."

"He belonged to my father," said the Colonel, happy, relieved, healthy again, at the doctor's optimistic diagnosis.

"What!" cried the doctor, wheeling around. "What's your name?"

"Cassius Steptoe," said the Colonel, proudly.

"Not the Steptoes of Pocahontas County!"

"Yes"—proudly and distantly.

"Why, Mr. — Colonel Steptoe — I was raised up in Pocahontas County—I'm a Pegram—Henry Pegram's my name! We used to live just across the Chattahatchee from your place, Blue Grass Hall. My pa was Major Upshur Pegram—had the pack of long-eared foxhounds! Don't you remember? But what are you doing—"

"My boy, my boy!" cried the Colonel warmly, springing from his cot to shake the doctor's hands. "So you're old Upshur Pegram's boy Henry! By Nez! I see the likeness now — without any specs! You got the old scamp's cowlick! Fine old gentleman! Fine old gentleman! He used to always drink Kentucky Taylor! Ain't that right? I recollect—" But he saw Tim shaking his head, and pointing toward the cot; so he got back into bed again.

DOCTOR PEGRAM sat down on the foot of the cot. And the Colonel, joyful to have lighted upon one of his own people, told him stories of King Cole; of Pocahontas County; of his capture, in the early summer, of Piffy Cuccini, a West Side gunman; of the subsequent facile disappearance of the reward for Piffy's capture in a run of mysteriously hard luck at the Long Island tracks; and of his lard luck generally.

It was thrashed out that the doctor and the Colonel were sixth cousins! Now, usually, when uncovering a kinsman so closely related as the sixth cousin, the Colonel became tactfully, yet steadfastly, importunate for financial assistance; but in this particular case, after a few adroit advances, he discovered that the doctor himself was impoverished, having to care for four children by his first marriage; three by his second, and two wives; notwithstanding he had only one small job with which to do all this caring; whereupon, the Colonel, overcome, presented his kinsman with quite a bundle of King Cole certificates.

So the reunion went on!

At last, Doctor Pegram, now fully aware of the Colonel's desperate neediness, said: "Let me examine you again!" He placed his hand on the Colonel's chest and pressed heavily. He asked, as if expecting an affirmative answer: "Does that hurt?"

Tim nodded his head confidently at the Colonel, who answered, "Yes!"

"Um-m-m-m!" said the doctor thoughtfully. And after a pause, during which Tim thought he saw him wink ever so slightly at the Colonel: "Let me run downstairs and phone to the company to send a claim agent. You may be hurt bad, and they ought to settle with you at once!"

"Just a minute, Henry!" said the Colonel, pulling the comical, leering smile, with exaggerated wagging of the head, that he had picked up from the movies. "You haven't—you haven't got forty drops of Bourbon in that satchel—have you?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the doctor. "Sure I have! Haven't you got any Bourbon? That must mean you haven't had any food lately, either! You must be hard up!"

"I got my taxi right outside," said Tim hoarsely; "I'll go for the claim agent!" He wished to tell his version of the Colonel's disaster again.

And while Tim was fetching the claim agent, the Colonel chatted of many things with Cousin Henry. But, at last, he spoke of Blue Grass Hall. "Some of these new-rich have got hold of the old place now. I've always swore to buy it back, and some day I'll do it! I swear I will! By Nez! By Nez! I swear I will!"

THE doctor was almost in tears when the claim agent arrived. To him, he made such a gloomy report of the Colonel's condition, in a whispered conversation outside the hall-room, that, with what Tim had already told, the claim agent was keen for an immediate settlement.

He went into the hall-room and offered the Colonel one hundred dollars for a complete release. The doctor stood in the doorway, out of view of the claim agent, shaking his head vigorously. As the bid rose, the doctor continued to shake his head. The Colonel refused steadfastly the amounts offered by the agent, saying that he thought it best to place the matter in the hands of his lawyers. At last the agent offered five hundred dollars for a release. And though the Colonel was enjoying this

bidding for him, as if he were a horse at an auction of a racing stable, his eyes glistened, the doctor nodded his head, and the Colonel was knocked down to the claim agent.

The latter was anxious to have the settlement in black and white. He made out a check for five hundred dollars and gave it to the Colonel. A release was signed, and the agent left, chuckling at his shrewdness.

"Colonel," said Doctor Pegram hesitatingly, as he tarried by his patient's bedside, "that's a lot of money. I know you'll understand—won't think I'm impertinent—if I offer a suggestion about it. That'd make you a mighty nice nest egg—something for a rainy day. I'd deposit it in a bank, if I were you."

"Now that's mighty sensible advice," agreed the Colonel half-heartedly. "I've been trying to follow it all my life, Henry; but I've been unfortunate. I sure think I'll do it this time, though. Henry,

"Your bounty's beyond my speaking,
But though my mouth be dumb, my heart shall thank you."

"Oh—that's all right. I'll drop in to see you tomorrow, Colonel." And Doctor Pegram took up his bundle of King Cole certificates and left.

"Where's Tim Toohey?" asked the Colonel of Mrs. Handy, who was coming in the door with a tray of delicacies. For while Mrs. Handy's was not a boarding-house, yet she always took care of her sick people. And just at this moment, the Colonel did not see fit to tell her of his sudden cure; nor, for that matter, of his sudden affluence, being secretive about his business affairs.

"Now, Colonel," soothed Mrs. Handy, "you ain't got no need of Tim Toohey. He's down in the kitchen, drying hisself out. Leave 'im be! Tim'll talk horse-racing to you, and get you excited, and you're too dangerously sick! And besides"—suspiciously—"you ain't got no money to bet on races, have you?"

"Get Tim Toohey, like I tell you!" ordered the Colonel, taking advantage of the querulousness allowed from invalids.

Mrs. Handy left; Tim came.

"TIMOTHY, I want you to get this little check cashed, and lay it all on Jigtime to win in the second race at Belmont Park tomorrow! You ought to get about thirty to one! Just pass me that bowl of broth, Timothy!"

"Colonel—course it ain't up to a fellow like me to be advising of you—but—but—you oughta soak that money away in a bank. It don't seem like God always softens the wind for the clipped sheep, Colonel, like He did in this case. You'll need that money bad some day. Mind your P's and Q's!"

"No, no sir, no siree! And don't call me a sheep, Timothy; nor a lamb, either! I never was a man to play safe, and I ain't going to start now! You do like I tell you, Timothy! That Jigtime is a sure winner!"

"Why'n't you play the favorite in that race—Willy Nilly? There's a sure enough sure thing, Colonel! Odds three to one. You got real money now. You don't have to plunge. Play 'em safe!"

To lead the Colonel was easy, as long as the leader was by his side; so Tim talked him into betting on Willy Nilly. "Stick to the favorites!" Tim advised.

"Let's see," mused the Colonel, the germ of a great scheme popping into his head. "Tomorrow's Tuesday. Reach me the last racing form, Timothy—where'd you hide 'em? Let's see who's entered for Wednesday. We'll have two thousand dollars to bet on that day!"

Tim and the Colonel pored over the racing forms and dope sheets, and came to the conclusion that Going South, at two to one, would be an absolute "cinch" for Wednesday.

"How much does that make?" cried the Colonel excitedly. "How much does that make? Get your pencil and some paper, Timothy! Figure it up!"

"Six thousand dollars, whew!" said Tim, after severe effort, for neither he nor the Colonel was very fast with the figures. Tim was becoming excited himself. "Let me run over them figures again," he added doubtfully. And after moments of deep concentration: "Dang it! That's right! Six thousand dollars! Figures don't lie! That's sure some money, Colonel!"

"That ain't any money at all, Timothy!" declared the Colonel, energetically scanning the dope sheets. "Wait till I get through! Just hand me those poached eggs, please! Wait till I get through! Sharpen up your pencil, and get some more paper!"

The Colonel unfolded his scheme to the now palpitating Tim. It was difficult to come under the sway of his magnetic enthusiasm and overwhelming optimism and not be influenced. Tim was. The scheme was to work over the dope sheets, find out what horses were to run any time soon, and keep on laying bigger and bigger bets on them until they had won some real money.

"I've got real money to start with, and, by Nez! there's nothing can stop me. Hey, Timothy? I'm right! I know I'm right! And my plan is so simple I wonder somebody hadn't thought of it before. Just pick out the good ones—and I can do that—and keep doubling! By Nez!"

The Colonel also unfolded to the now hypnotized Tim the use to which he intended to put this money. "I'm going to buy the old place back, Blue Grass Hall, Timothy. I've always sworn I would when my luck turned. And it's turned now. I'll end my days on the old place where I, and all my people, were born."

SO TIM and the Colonel planned a campaign. Tim furnished the practical knowledge, did the figuring, and made the Colonel stick to the favorites. The Colonel was all for playing a "long shot"—"just to change the luck," he said.

"You don't want your luck changed!" Tim replied. "Look what you're winning now!" His pencil was getting hot.

"All right, Timothy, all right," agreed the Colonel disappointedly; "but it wouldn't take so long, if you let me play the long shots." They looked up the past records of all the horses, they selected substitute horses for all sorts of track—mud, fast, slow, slop, heavy—they religiously, thanks to Tim, confined themselves to conservative favorites.

"What do you make the total now, Timothy?"

Tim did some erasing and refiguring and announced: "Two hundred thousand, thirty-nine—naw—it's two hundred and thirty-nine thousand—dollars. Good God! And they're all cinches, all cinches!"

"That's too much money," objected the Colonel magnanimously. "It's more'n I need. It ain't right, either. The bookies are good fellows. I don't want to put 'em out of business."

"Well, that's right, too," agreed Tim disappointedly. "I got some good friends among the bookies. No use being a hog."

"Let me figure up just what I need, Timothy," said the Colonel, with a very conservative, businesslike air. "Let me have some of that paper. And move that toast and honey over here!" After a time, and after much effort, he announced decisively and conservatively: "A hundred thousand dollars will be plenty, Timothy. I owe Mrs. Handy this little sum—$29.10; then I figure this will cover some other little debts of mine, and I can get the old place back for this—yes—a hundred thousand dollars is plenty—more'n plenty for me. But by Nez! by Nez! I'm forgetting you, Timothy! You've got to have something out of this!"

"Well, that's certainly mighty nice of you to think of me, Colonel," said Tim gratefully. "I sure do 'preciate it!"

"Oh, it's nothing. Don't mention it, Timothy," deprecated the Colonel, with a wave of his hand. "You've been a good chauffeur to me. It's a pleasure to do it. Now let's see. How'd you like to have enough to buy that garage where you keep your car?"

"Well—well!" exclaimed Tim, surprised at the magnanimity of the offer. He pondered. At last he said hesitatingly: "Of course, I'd like to own that garage, and so would the missus—and even the kids—be crazy about it; but—but"—suddenly—"are you going to have any automobiles at Blue Grass Hall, Colonel, sir?"

"Well," considered the Colonel, as he pursed his lips, "it'll mostly be horses there, Timothy; but, of course, I'll naturally have to have a few automobiles."

"Well, then," declared Tim appealingly; "give me the money in cash, and let me go along to Pocahontas County and drive for you. I'd miss you bad, Colonel, if you left."

The Colonel was visibly affected. For a long moment he could not speak. Tim hunched forward in the chair, winking continuously, his cap dangling to and fro.

"LET me shake your hand, Timothy," said the old gentleman, with a break in his voice. "You and the family shall come along to Blue Grass Hall with me. There's a brick cottage on the place, with

vines all over it, and white shutters. You and Mrs. Toohey can have that as long as you live. I'll get some automobiles. About the money—how would twenty-five thousand do?"

Tim was speechless.

"All right then," continued the Colonel, "say no more about it! Just draw a line—but by Nez! wait a minute!—there's Mrs. Handy to think of! Let's see. A trust fund of say—ten thousand dollars would about fix her up—that makes thirty-five thousand extra. Just draw a line, Timothy, through the place where we reached a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars. We'll stop there. How long do you figure that'll take?"

"Maybe about three weeks," said Tim happily. "Colonel—would you mind if I added just enough here to get the missus a washing-machine?"

"That's a mighty long time," observed the Colonel despondently. "No, let the washing-machine go, Timothy. Keep it in round figures. I'll have all those sort of things at Blue Grass Hall. Don't you reckon we might slide in just one long shot, Timothy?"

"I betcha not!" Tim was determined not to let the brick cottage slip out of his hands. "We got to stick to the favorites! Them horses we picked is all cinches, dead cinches! And besides, three weeks ain't long to win a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars! Dang it! You don't know the A B C's, Colonel, of minding your P's and Q's! Leave it be, just like we got it planned!"

"All right, then," said the Colonel resignedly. "Here's the check. A little more coffee, Timothy! Take it over tomorrow morning and lay it all on Willy Nilly at three to one."

"I just remember," announced Tim, scratching his head. "Tomorrow's Tuesday, ain't it? Well, I got to drive a party up in the country tomorrow morning."

"Give me back the check," said the Colonel. "I reckon I'll feel well enough in the morning to slip out for a few minutes." The Colonel had no intention of hurrying his convalescence, as long as Mrs. Handy was bringing up such good food.

In the doorway of the hall-room, Tim paused, cap in hand, a happy smile on his face, and said, with many winks: "I betcha you're glad now, I wouldn't let you play that Jigtime, that long odds horse, ain't you?"

"I reckon I am," admitted the Colonel doubtfully. "Anyway, me for the A B C's of this P's and Q's business, though personally I like the X Y Z's better!"

ON TUESDAY afternoon, a bright and sunshiny afternoon, at about the hour of Monday's disaster, the Colonel was hurrying limpingly up Sixth Avenue to cross at the corner near Tim Toohey's garage. He had an evening newspaper in the pocket of his pongee coat, which was still muddy; the rent in his pongee trousers was held together by pins; he was hatless. As he reached the corner, Tim burst forth from the garage, wildly waving a newspaper in his hand.

"We win, Colonel, sir! We win!" he shouted happily, rushing up to where the Colonel stood. He pointed with his finger at the result of the second race at Belmont Park.

But the Colonel, joyless, answerless, plunged into the traffic o Sixth Avenue—brakes ground, automobiles swerved, imprecations were hurled, rheumatism twinged, but he reached the middle of the street. A surface car, bell clanging, came swooping down upon him.. He made a very agile jump, escaped death by inches and an "L" pillar, and, out of the corner of his eye, caught the number of the car. It was 1861! As he paused for a moment to swear and shake his knotted cane at the retreating car, Tim caught up with him.

"What's the matter, Colonel? We win! We win!"

"Let go my arm, Timothy! It's Mrs. Handy! She's on to the $500! She says we've been kidding her, and she's hopping mad! I told her about the $10,000 trust fund! But her mind's on that $29.10! Oh! I hope Sam Endress is still in town! Thank God for Mrs. Handy's other nickel—and the subway! Let me go, Timothy!"

"But Colonel! Everything's all right! Willy Nilly wins! Willy Nilly wins. We're on our way to Blue Grass Hall now! Willy Nilly wins!"

"I know, Timothy, I know!" said the Colonel fretfully, as he broke away, and dashed for the farther sidewalk. "But I bet the money on Jigtime!"

A Woman's Fight Against Great Odds

The Devonshers

Jail—Confinement for a Proud Nature That Sickens and Dies Out of the Open! But Eve Must Choose Between Taking Her Punishment Now and Spoiling the Rest of Her Life

By Honoré Willsie Morrow

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

"EVE," said the judge, "it looks like I'd have to—to put you over in the jail tonight."

Eve's eyes blazed. "But you told me you'd take my word for my not leaving the tavern, that the other was not necessary."

"I know I did. But I think it would be better in the long run for you to give in on this point. You know there's a lot of feeling about you here in the Basin." . . .

The trouble had begun with the murder of Angus Duncan in his branding corral, and the theft of his horses. Careful search by Sheriff Brownell yielded small results in the way of a murderer or a motive other than theft; and, as he said, ordinary horse-runners did not kill. Angus's widow, Minnie, could name only one enemy—Eve Devonsher, who had had several bitter quarrels with him. Their last quarrel had been over Angus's determination to profiteer in horses when the British Major Colbaith came to Wyoming during the World War as a buyer for the Allies. Eve's persistent efforts to arouse the ranchers from their apathy and their interest only in making money out of the Allies' necessity made her generally unpopular. Besides, with her widowed mother, she had always rested under the cloud of her father's death on suspicion of horse-running. Shortly before Angus's death she had reached the climax and had broken with her fiancé for his refusal to go to war. Then she had announced her intention to go to France and had left home forthwith.

Following the inquest Sid Brownell led Judge Jones and Peter Colbaith on a "bear hunt," and on the way out discovered Eve in camp. Remembering various suspicious circumstances, the sheriff proposed to arrest her and take her back. But Eve flatly denied guilt and offered to resist until Peter as a friend convinced her she should return to face down her neighbors' suspicions and contempt or hatred, and to establish her innocence. Sid would have put her in jail but the judge let her stay at home on her word of honor. The next day the judge found his hand forced, and told Eve she must go to jail.

Eve drew a deep breath; slowly her chin came up and her eyes filled with defiant fire. "If I go with you over to the jail, Willy Jones, I withdraw my promise about not leaving if I can and wish to."

"Well, I guess that's fair," said the judge. "We might as well go now, eh?"

"WHY not have supper first?" asked Peter in a curiously even tone.

"We'd better move along now," insisted the judge, twisting his fringe of whiskers

until the skin lifted from his emaciated jaw.

"I don't like the idea of being shut in anywhere." Eve's voice was suddenly breathless. "That's been my pet nightmare for years and it's suffocation!"

Judge Jones nodded. "I know, Eve. But—well, it's only taking chloroform so that the knife may go deep."

"Let's arrange this another way, judge," said Peter. "I am more than willing—I am eager to—"

Judge Jones raised his hand. "No! Don't try to interfere too far, major. We appreciate your interest but this is no longer a matter of arranging. Eve, make yourself a little night pack and come along."

Eve stood breathing rapidly, face pale, eyes burning, poised lightly, one hand against the window frame. In the glory of the afterglow she seemed unreal to Peter; unreal except for the suffering in her eyes. He smiled at her.

"Zero hour, eh?" he exclaimed.

Eve gave a little start and after a barely perceptible interval smiled, though it was a twisted smile. "Zero hour! Yes! I don't think I want a pack, Willy Jones. Though —yes, I think perhaps I'll be more comfortable if I change."

She crossed to her room. When she had closed the door she twisted her hands together, then began rapidly to shift into her riding clothes. She made no pack but emerged into the living-room empty-handed.

"Where're your night things, Eve?" demanded the judge.

"I have a toothbrush and comb in my pocket, Willy Jones. I don't fancy I shall make much of a hand at going to bed in a cell."

The judge shrugged his shoulders. Eve turned to Peter. "Will you explain to mother, when she wakes up? And please—don't either you or mother come to see me in the jail."

"I'll take care of your mother. Have you money with you?"

"Yes. Though just what money can buy me in Antelope Basin I have no idea. Well, Willy Jones, 'On with the dance! Let joy be unconfined!' "

Eve strode out of the door so quickly that the judge was obliged to leap after her.

"Where is Sid?" she asked as he fell in beside her. "How come that the sheriff was not permitted this pleasure?"

"Sid's got his hands full with Minnie and her gang. Eve, she's got the ranchers that have lost horses half crazy and Sid's not much better. Three of 'em have been in the garage going over Devonsher history for the last two hours."

"Devonsher history is all the history Antelope Basin ever had or ever will have!" Eve's chin was in the air.

"It could have been great history. That's the devil of it!" grunted the judge. "Keep your mouth shut, Eve, whatever is said," he added suddenly as a figure emerged from the dusk of the Plaza.

It was a man, not so tall as Eve and stockily built. One could perceive dark eyes, a dark, close-clipped mustache, and a linen dust coat.

"Eve! Judge! I didn't hear of this until yesterday. Eve, how could you be such a fool? I was so relieved when I thought you were in France!"

"But you didn't go to France yourself to prove my whereabouts, did you, Howard!" ejaculated Eve.

"Don't start that again!" The man's voice was peremptory. "I've come down to help you, not to rake up old sores."

"You can't help me, Howard Freeman, except by never speaking to me again. Oh! I mustn't forget my manners! How is your asthma? War asthma, I suppose one might call it, seeing that it developed after America joined the Allies!"

"Freeman," the judge interrupted firmly, "you go over to the tavern and wait for me. I want to talk to you."

"Eve! Eve! I can't bear to see this happening and to see you changed so!" Howard put his hand on Eve's arm.

It was the same arm on which an hour before, Peter's pitiful hand had rested. Eve moved away from Howard's touch, but gently.

"Howard," she said, "you don't know how much you missed by not being a man."

HOWARD rushed past her toward the tavern. Eve stared after his dusky form. "Willy Jones, I thought I loved him once. I really was off my head for days when I found he was afraid to go to war."

Judge Jones urged her to move along the trail. "No matter what you've thought, you are an idiot to alienate any one who wants to help you."

"I'm going to see Eve Devonsher shut in a cell before I budge!" shrilled Minnie. "I'll not move till you put her in a cell."

"How could Howard Freeman help me? The only story he has to tell is that I pleaded, then wept, then cast him off. He has a streak of yellow in him. I want never to see him again."

"Come, Eve! Come! You are wasting time."

"Why, so I am! For just a moment I forgot that I was overdue for an important engagement." Eve pressed onward in silence, until in the glow of the kerosene lamp beside the courthouse door she saw a group of faces. Then she halted and clutched Judge Jones's hand, with a sob.

"Willy Jones! Willy Jones! Willy Jones!"

The judge groaned. "Eve, I had to do it. I'm the law. And I love your very heart's core. I'll fix Sid for letting this crowd gather!"

She clung desperately to his bony hand, just for the space of two long-drawn sobs. Then she dropped it.

"Zero hour and over the top we go!" she said huskily.

"Here she comes!" shrilled Minnie Duncan.

The judge paused, Eve, tall and motionless, beside him. "And here she stays," he returned, "until you go home, Minnie. Where is your father?"

"Here I am!" Sid appeared in the open door. He still was sweating, though the mountain night was chill. "These folks aren't doing any harm and they're free citizens."

"You can't blame Minnie so much, judge!" Henry Worth's cool face appeared beside the sheriff's. "After all, Devonshers and Duncans always hated each other and Minnie's a Duncan now and not a Brownell."

THERE were half a dozen ranchers in the crowd. One of them called roughly:

"Don't try to coddle the female bandit, judge! We are all equal, male and female alike in Wyoming, and a woman horse thief has got to take what's coming to her, same as a man."

"Oh, that you, Johnny Miller?" said the judge. "Yes, I remember! It was about three years ago that Eve went up and birthed a baby for your wife, while Doc Peabody was over at the Junction and you were drunk at Henry's place."

There was a sudden silence interrupted by another rancher, a stout, bearded man with a Stetson hat on the back of his head. "I suppose that gives Eve a right to run his brood mares off for him," he growled.

The judge's eye peered at the last speaker. "Good old Bear Folsom, eh! You ran your boy out when he wanted to go up to college at Laramie and Eve loaned him the money from her school-teaching earnings to grub-stake him till he could work his way through! Now then, you folks disperse. You'll all have a chance to tell your story in proper form in court."

"I'm going to see Eve Devonsher shut in a cell before I budge!" shrilled Minnie.

"Disperse to your homes!" thundered Judge Jones.

The men back of Minnie moved slowly into the dusk but Minnie stood her ground. Her face, still tear-swollen, worked pitifully. "I'll not move till you put her in a cell."

"Sid, take that woman home!" shouted the judge.

Sid stared from his daughter to Judge Jones and back again.

"Dad, don't you dare to touch me!" Minnie's voice rose in a scream that merged into violent laughter.

"Sid"—Eve spoke calmly—"you go get a dipper of water and throw it in Minnie's face. Move, and move *mucho pronto!*"

Sid hesitated, swaying from one foot to the other. Eve did not stir, but even in the flickering lamplight the authority in her eyes was unmistakable. "Sid! Do as I tell you!" she repeated.

The sheriff turned ponderously into the courtroom. Minnie continued to laugh and sob wildly. In a moment Sid appeared in the door with the tin dipper in his hand.

"Now take your choice," Eve said. "You throw it or I throw it, and quickly."

Sid dumped the quart of water precipitately in his daughter's distorted face. Instantly order was restored in Minnie's countenance.

"Minnie, go home!" Eve's voice, clear, incisive, authoritative, cut through the night air. "Sid, take her arm and go home with her."

Minnie glared at Eve but when Sid took her arm and turned her toward the east trail, she made no remonstrance. Eve watched the two disappear; then she rubbed her forehead wearily. "Get out of the courthouse, Henry Worth. I'm going to be alone with the judge."

Henry slid into the darkness of the west trail. Eve led the judge into the courtroom. "Their master's voice!" muttered the old man.

If Eve heard, she made no sign. There were lighted angle lamps on either side of the wall behind the judge's bench. Besides lighting the desk, they lighted the open door of the office and the barred door of the jail. Eve stood rigid beside the desk while Judge Jones unlocked the barred door and lighted a lamp on the wall beyond it. A passageway with an adobe floor sprang into view. At the end of the passage, another barred door. This the judge also unlocked and opened; then he stood waiting in the yellow glow of the lamp, his strange gaunt face working.

Eve, chin up, nostrils dilated, chest rising and falling rapidly, looked from the judge back over her shoulder to the open door, which in the daytime framed the entrancing view of old Gray Bull and the marvelous June sky of Wyoming. There was no sound in all the world. She turned from the door to look into the judge's one eye. After a moment's contemplation of this, her head dropped and slowly, very slowly, she crossed the threshold into the jail. She moved noiselessly, a thin, green-clad, boyish figure, along the adobe passageway, into the cell. Judge Jones closed the door upon her and locked it; then stood still as if appalled by the enormity of what he had done.

Eve caught her thumb knuckle between her teeth and blood ran down across her wrist. She did not take her eyes from the man's tragic face. Suddenly she flung the hand she had bitten violently against the bars.

"Willy Jones! Listen to me if you love me! I'm suffocating! I'm suffocating!"

The judge tore at his sparse gray fringe and his single eye portrayed an anguished determination more poignantly than two eyes ever could have done.

"Eve! I am the law!" His voice broke completely. Then he shouted: "You are not suffocating! You are going to take what's coming to the Devonshers standing, or I'll turn to hate you with the rest of the Basin."

Eve dropped her hand; her chin came forward and her eyes reflected the man's determination. "Go away, and leave me alone," she said huskily.

"I'll go as far as my office and no farther," replied the judge. "I'm not a Brownell to take your orders." He turned very deliberately and strode along the passage into the courtroom, leaving the jail door open behind him.

An hour later, when he reappeared in the courtroom doorway Eve still was standing as he had left her, staring through the bars, her brilliant head extravagantly lovely in the lamplight.

"I'm going over to the tavern for a little while, Eve. I'll lock the outside courtroom door and nobody else has a key but Sid. I won't be gone long."

"Don't hurry on my account, Willy Jones! I'm quite lost in contemplation of the sweetness and light of being a woman."

The judge rubbed his whiskers and strode out. Eve listened to his locking of the courthouse door, then turned slowly and surveyed her cell. It was a small, sheet-iron room with an adobe floor and a barred window set high against the ceiling. An iron cot-bed with blankets and no mattress was set under the window. A wash-stand and accessories completed the furnishings. The entire interior, including the furniture and excepting the floor, had been painted a bright green by some cheerful soul. Eve looked at the blankets, then, with her spurred foot, pushed them to the floor and sat down on the cot, rested her elbow on her knee, her chin in the palm of her hand, and continued her contemplation of sweetness and light.

It was a contemplation that twisted her full, sensitive lips into lines of nameless suffering.

THE judge had been gone about half an hour when the outer door opened and a moment later Sid Brownell appeared bearing a pillow and a pile of quilts and blankets. He unlocked the cell door and dumped the load on the bed. As he picked up the jail blankets from the floor, Eve said in a speculative manner:

"I wonder if now you are happy, Sid?"

The sheriff straightened his great bulk and answered with the mess of dirty blankets hanging from both arms.

"You won't be so cool, Eve, after you realize the evidence against you."

"You speak hopefully but you aren't answering my question, Sid."

"No, I'm not happy. I know what I owe you as well as you do. But I owe Minnie more."

"And you don't owe Angus Duncan anything but the six feet of soil you provided for him, Sid."

"That may be, but Minnie, she's no longer a Brownell and her baby ain't going to be a Brownell. I'll see to it that she's free for the rest of her life."

"When is the baby coming, Sid?" asked Eve, gently.

"Six months from now, she says. God, I hope it's a boy!"

"If you let her get hysterics, there won't be any baby, Sid."

"Well, you can't blame her. She cared a lot about Angus. You always hated Minnie and weren't fair to her."

"I liked Minnie before my father was killed. She was jealous of me as we grew older. I never shall forgive her for getting the other children to call me 'horse thief's daughter.' "

Sid's head sagged miserably. "I know! She never should have done it. You know I tried to break her of it."

Eve nodded. "Well, this is a heavy business, Sid! What does one do in jail?"

"Sleep, mostly."

Eve looked up into his face. "Do you think I shall sleep, Sid?"

"I can't help it!" the man burst forth, passionately. "I had to do it. It was my duty as sheriff!"

"Exactly! You felt that the time had come at last when you wanted me to tell the world just how it was between your people and mine."

"Huh! I'm not afraid of your telling a thing that'll put you to shame, Eve."

"Me? To shame!" Eve laughed softly. "Why, Sid, as a child Minnie saw to it that I was put to such depths of shame that nothing since has touched me."

"THAT'S all bunk! You're the proudest human being in Antelope Basin, this minute—and suffering the torments of the damned. Me—I know!" Sid's face worked as he eyed Eve's tortured eyes and smiling lips. "But"—passionately—"you shouldn't have shot Angus. That was going too far. You Devonshers have got to learn once and for all that you aren't above the law."

"Once and for all! Sid, I'm the last of the Devonshers. Antelope Basin can thank God for that."

"They needn't," Sid responded gruffly. "Shall I get you some books or something?"

"No, thank you. Just keep people out of here. Most of all my mother and Major Colbaith."

"Now, why those two in particular?" demanded Sid with sudden curiosity. "I should think you'd want to see your mother."

"I do, but I hope to heaven she will be spared the shame ever of seeing me in a cell."

"Of course"—impatiently—"she'll have to see you. A trial like this drags on and on—as you're evidently going to plead not guilty."

"Sid, supposing that I'd gotten away to France and you'd never had to arrest me—how would you have felt about that?"

Sid set his teeth and turned toward the door. "You've got no business to ask me!"

Eve's eyes, following his retreat down the passage, were suddenly very intelligent and very thoughtful. When he had disappeared she rose and slowly made up her cot. The blankets and quilts were from her own bed.

"Poor little mother!" said Eve drearily.

She had only just finished this task when the judge came in with the Chinaman and a supper tray. Lee Fu set the tray on the end of the wash-stand. He was violently agitated.

"They can't put Missy in jail!" he shrilled.

"But they have done so, Lee Fu!" Eve shook her head.

"Can't put Missy in jail! Can't do!"

"You can go on home, Lee, and come back in about an hour for the tray," said the judge.

The Chinaman slammed the cell door and shuffled down the passage. "They can't put Missy in jail! Can't do!" he continued to protest shrilly.

Judge Jones disappeared into his office. Eve glanced indifferently at the tray and did not attempt to eat. For an hour there was silence; then came a knock on the outer door. The judge opened it and Peter pushed firmly over the threshold.

"I've come for the tray," he announced, and he marched in a businesslike way into the adobe passage.

A deep blush rushed from Eve's throat up to the roots of her glowing hair. But she did not stir. The judge glared for a moment, then thoughtfully followed the Englishman. The two men stood looking through the bars at the tray.

"That won't do, Eve! You must eat," exclaimed the judge.

"Do you ever try forced feeding in your jail, Willy Jones?" asked Eve with exaggerated interest.

"Why not let me in, judge, to display my skill at enticing a lady to eat?" asked Peter.

"No!" cried Eve, half rising, then sinking back. "Major, I implore you, go away and don't come into the jail again!"

"On the whole, considering it comes from a bull-headed Britisher, I'd say that was a good suggestion!" The judge unlocked the door as he spoke, shoved Peter within, and went back to his office.

PETER limped over to the tray. "Your mother sent this to you. She made the salad herself and Lee Fu isn't half bad at baking beans. The coffee is cold, but the rest of the chow can be eaten. Really! And I'm to take the tray back and show your mother exactly how much of a trencherman you are. It will comfort her a bit if she sees you have made a meal."

Eve did not stir. "How is mother?"

"In good form. I'll say you are not all Devonsher. Heaven alone can help Minnie Duncan if she comes to the tavern."

Eve smiled suddenly. "Mother is all mother. I'll try to eat a little if you will promise me to leave immediately after."

"I promise!" Peter placed the tray on the cot beside Eve, then established himself on the floor, his back against the sheet-iron wall. "Palatial as any dugout has a right to be," he commented, looking about him as Eve slowly worked on a mouthful of beans. "Floor feels familiar to one lately from sunny France. Bed couldn't be improved upon. All of sheet iron set in adobe. Quaint idea! Really! Not such a pleasant green and yet you are lovely set against it. Ruby and topaz. Lovely. Incidentally that brown bread is pleasant fodder. That's right. No hard-tack there, eh? And still incidentally and quite in passing, what a hell-cat Minnie Duncan is!"

Eve finished the plate of beans doggedly, then turned to the salad. "When she was a roly-poly little girl and I was a slatty one, we were great friends. But when we entered our teens Angus Duncan preferred me and she never forgave me. Not that I wanted the—" Eve broke off decisively.

Peter waited a moment for Eve to continue; then he said: "She met me as I left the tavern and I quite insisted, you know, on seeing her back to her house. She gave me a terrible wigging. There was a venom in it that was remarkable. Really. She is under the impression that I have allied myself with you and she gave me several apparently authoritative reasons why I am mistaken in doing so."

Eve completed the clearing of the salad plate and looked at Peter. "She was really in love with Angus. I'll never forgive her for wrecking my girlhood, yet I understand the working of her mind so well at this moment that it's hard for me to get excited over her. Major, will you go back to the tavern now?"

"If you insist!" Peter rose and stood looking down on Eve. "Will you try to sleep tonight?"

"I can't promise," replied Eve. "You must let me have my little fling, major!"

She smiled and he lifted the tray and turned hurriedly to the door. The judge came in response to his call and shortly the jail was in silence again. Nor did Judge Jones appear during the night, although Eve knew he did not leave the building.

She paced the floor until dawn replaced the guttering light in the passageway. Then she flung herself on the cot and when, about six o'clock, Judge Jones walked softly up to the door and looked in on her, she was asleep, her face very white against her waving red hair. She sighed deeply and continuously in her sleep and the old man echoed her as he turned away.

About eight o'clock Eve opened her eyes and looked at her wrist watch. She sprang to her feet, panting, suffocating; ran to the cell door and shook it, then bowed her forehead against the cold bars and groaned. But the agony of realization passed and though she trembled exceedingly, Eve finished a careful toilet and was making up her bed when the Chinaman appeared with her breakfast. Judge Jones unlocked the door and Lee Fu, his yellow skin taking on a greenish tint from the walls, slid the tray

to the wash-stand and declared vehemently:

"They can't put Missy in jail!"

Eve gave a forlorn chuckle. "So that's the formula, is it, Lee Fu? Very well! But they have, Lee Fu."

"Can't do!" grunted the Chinaman, offering Eve a cup of steaming coffee.

She forced herself to eat the breakfast. When she had finished, the judge let Lee Fu out, and returned almost immediately with a tall man of perhaps fifty-five who looked like a ruddy Mark Twain.

"Here's Jim Poindexter, Eve," said Judge Jones, motioning the newcomer into the cell.

Eve, looking very much like a tired boy, held out her hand. "Good morning, Mr. Poindexter."

The lawyer held her hand firmly and looked her over out of a pair of keen gray eyes. "It used to be Uncle Jim and it better had be now! Even though I haven't seen you since you were a child! Lord A'mighty, but you look like Dave. And"—glancing with a twinkle around the cell—"I suspect you act like Dave. Sit down, Eve, and tell me all about it."

He took one end of the cot and Eve leaned against the wall at the other. Her dull green flannel shirt blended with the green behind her. She clasped long tanned hands around her knee.

"It's perfectly simple, Uncle Jim. There is no use in trying to read a lot of psychology and hidden motives into the case. There are none. Antelope Basin was absolutely indifferent to the trouble in Europe until we entered the war. Then I got the women interested in Red Cross work and it looked as if we really were going to do our bit until Major Colbaith came here this spring. He's an English soldier who's been so badly wounded that he was more useful in this country than in France. He buys horses for the British army. But I wouldn't be surprised if he had other and more important missions."

She paused thoughtfully. There was dignity in the lift of her head in spite of the boyish informality of her posture. The lawyer made an entry in a little black notebook.

EVE glanced at the scrawl, smiled slightly and went on. "Antelope Basin could see no reason why Major Colbaith and British necessity were not fair meat for it. It seemed to me that every man here lay awake nights to plan how to cheat the major in horse-flesh. Really, Uncle Jim, it was humiliating to think of this Englishman who must carry in his mind's eye the nearness of catastrophe over there, finding us rabid to make money out of the catastrophe. Humiliating! It made me frantic. I tried every means in my power to get them to be fair, to help by playing the game. Of course, all that I succeeded in doing was in lining the county up against the major and me. At last, in a Red Cross meeting, I told the whole pack what I thought of them."

Eve paused and seemed to be contemplating something extraordinarily unpleasant; then she sighed and continued her story.

"Everybody was there, men, women, and children. I wasn't nasty in my talk, you understand. I tried to make them understand the spectacle they were making of themselves for history to record. I think even now the appeal I made might have gone over if Minnie Duncan hadn't been there. I suppose she thought some of my shots were for Angus, who'd crawled out of the draft. And she hated me always because she knew I could have married Angus had I wished to.

"At any rate, Minnie got on her feet. I can see her now. The Red Cross cap accentuated the sullen lines in her face. I'm not a fanciful person but I had the queerest feeling that there was something menacing in Minnie's mere fatness. I can't remember her exact words, of course, but she opened by saying that she'd do everything she could to help Major Colbaith if Eve Devonsher would drop out. She said that she refused to be bossed and bullied by the daughter of a horse thief, that every one knew that the very roof over the Devonshers' heads was kept there by stolen money, money that her father had got by running horses into Utah.

"The meeting was in the schoolhouse. I sat in a rear seat. Every head in the room turned toward me as if they worked on a common pivot. And every face looked malevolent. I got up and tried to tell them how it was. But shame bound my tongue. I broke down and stumbled out of the schoolhouse. I knew I'd got to get away—anywhere—anywhere—away from Antelope Basin. And as I stumbled along to the

tavern I resolved to go to France. But before I went to France, I told myself, I'd take a month on the trail, gradually working my way down into Utah, getting a decent hold on myself as I went.

"Mother got home almost as soon as I did. I told her my plans, excepting that I didn't tell her how I was going to loiter on the way. She always worries so about me being alone on the trail. So I let her believe that I'd be in Salt Lake City in a week's time.

"I had in mind a place Sid Brownell had shown me years before. It was the place where father had camped—the year he was killed. I never saw it but the once, but always my mind has returned to it as a spot of perfect seclusion and peace. So I worked my way up into the bear country back of Gray Bull and finally made my camp in the cedar ring. It was just as beautiful as I remembered it, and it brought me back to myself. I had broken camp preparatory to pushing on to Salt Lake City when the judge and Sid came upon me. I think that's all, Uncle Jim."

She looked at the lawyer with an expression of wistful frankness.

"Sounds simple enough, doesn't it, Eve!" said Jim Poindexter. And he sat looking at her for a long moment before he asked, "May I smoke?" and began to fill a small black pipe. When he had the pipe drawing violently he went on: "If I were you, Eve, I'd tell my lawyer all of the facts connected with the case. This serves a double purpose. It gives the lawyer what he needs to work on and it relieves the client's mind by making him feel that some one in the world knows the whole truth about him and is loyal to him.'"

Eve started and leaned forward, her blue eyes gazing deep into Jim Poindexter's gray ones. "Uncle Jim, do you think I killed Angus Duncan?"

"I think it's entirely possible!"

Eve gasped. "If you think it's even possible, then there's no use in your trying to handle my case."

Jim smoothed back the halo of white hair that crowned his great head, then carefully scraped a splatter of mud from his black puttee with the edge of the note-book.

"Let's understand each other, Eve. You are already determined to plead not guilty on both counts?"

"I am not guilty—on either count." Eve's eyes were full in the lawyer's.

"Very well! Then I shall build up our case on that basis."

"Will you please tell me why you take the case?" cried Eve, despairingly. "I can't pay you a big fee. There can be no increase in your reputation from handling it. You have little faith in me. Why take it?"

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" Jim looked at Eve earnestly. "I have every faith in you as a high-strung, intelligent, sportsmanlike woman. As I have said before, you may have shot Angus Duncan. If you did, I'll bet my life's savings you had adequate reasons for doing so. I knew your grandfather. I knew and loved your father. I am of Oregon Trail stock myself. My father went through the Antelope massacre with your grandfather. Old Carter Devonsher shot the Ute Indian that scalped and raped my Aunt Lucy. Although I haven't seen you since your father was killed, our family histories are entwined and I sincerely want to help you. Moreover and finally, it's going to be a devilishly interesting trial if I savvy what Willy Jones is after!"

"Will you tell me why you think it possible I could have shot Angus Duncan?" Eve's nostrils dilated.

"Now, why on earth should I go into that when we are pleading not guilty? Those reasons are up to Colonel Johnson—may Heaven help him! Believe me, that old veteran is going to earn his salary before we are through with him!"

"And you think it possible, too, that I stole the thoroughbreds?" demanded Eve.

Jim Poindexter's ruddy face grew more ruddy. His lips parted over a splendid set of teeth and he chuckled richly. "Lord A'mighty, girl, you are the daughter of Dave Devonsher! And he used to tell me that no dare-devil boy of the Basin could touch you."

"I'm twenty-nine now. Life has peeled the dare-devil from me as you take the skin from an orange," said Eve.

JIM grunted enigmatically. Then: "Eve," he asked suddenly, "have you any idea where the Princess horse is?"

"No, Uncle Jim, I haven't."

"Well, I have. She's a part of a contingent of horses that this English major is

gathering at Cheyenne for shipment to England."

"How do you know that?" asked Eve with a sudden brightening of the eyes.

"Henry Worth told me," replied Jim.

Eve laughed. "So the Princess horse goes to the wars, after all! Uncle Jim, Angus would revolve in his grave if he knew that!"

"How come?" Jim spoke casually while he knocked the ashes from his pipe.

Eve gave the lawyer's profile the benefit of one of her extremely intelligent glances and replied quite as casually: "Oh, he swore that no Antelope Basin horse would ever be war fodder. Quite a patriot, was Angus!"

"How did he make your mother let go of the horse?"

"I haven't asked her, Uncle Jim. You know I've been pretty completely occupied during the past thirty-six hours."

"You know, Eve, we'll never get anywhere unless you are frank with me. I've got to build our case on lack of motive, and it's going to be utterly impossible to do so unless you do teamwork with me."

"I want to do teamwork with you, Uncle Jim! I do, indeed," cried Eve passionately.

Jim leaned over and struck the washstand. "Then why, in the name of the Lord A'mighty, don't you play the game?" he roared.

"What's the trouble?" Judge Jones appeared at the door.

"Eve's utter lack of frankness," shouted Jim. "She's showing not the slightest confidence in me."

"Don't be a fool, Eve!" exclaimed the judge.

Eve shrugged her shoulders. "I can't help my nature!"

Jim Poindexter rose. "I'm sorry, judge, but I can't take the case. I'd like to, but Eve is too baffling. With evident intent to have exactly the opposite effect, she's succeeded in convincing me of her guilt."

"Oh, no! No!" cried Eve.

"There is one point you don't get, Jim," said Judge Jones, without offering to unlock the door. "Eve has endured a good deal in the way of wounded pride during her lifetime. The reticence that you attribute to guilt is probably due to the fact that automatically she tries to shield herself from being hurt."

Jim Poindexter turned slowly to look at Eve. She was standing beside the bed, poised as if for flight, her eyes protesting, her lips quivering. It was a tragic face.

"Ah!" The lawyer's voice was calm again. "Well, Eve, suppose we sit down and begin over."

"No!" panted Eve. "No! I want no more lawyers, Willy Jones! Bring on your trial. I'll take care of my own case."

"Oh, no, you won't!" returned the judge coolly. "Again I must remind you that I am not a Brownell to be bullied by a Devonsher. This trial is going to be conducted exactly as I say it shall be conducted. So fall into line, Eve. Jim, I want to talk to you."

The judge unlocked the door and the two men disappeared into the office. Eve sank slowly down on the cot, burying her face in her hands. Thus Peter found her, two hours later, after the judge had silently let him into the cell. When Eve did not look up Peter sat down beside her.

"Miss Devonsher," he said.

Still Eve did not drop her hands. "I asked you not to come again," she said.

"Mr. Poindexter asked me to talk to you. He and your mother are together at the tavern. Your mother seemed extraordinarily glad to see him."

Eve waited in silence. Peter took her hands gently from her face.

"You know I have utter faith in you, Miss Devonsher. I haven't asked for your confidence and I don't need it to make me realize that you are incapable of perpetrating either crime of which they accuse you. But I do think that my faith in you should have a reward."

Eve looked at him with weary eyes, but said nothing.

"I think you ought to help Mr. Poindexter to handle your case as he thinks it wise; that would be my reward." He smiled at her as though she were a child.

EVE rose suddenly and began to pace the length of the cell. "The law!" she cried. "What relation has it to the right? What relation has it to human understanding? None at all! Major Colbaith, I spurn it, as my father and grandfather before me did! I'm through with it."

"Law," said Peter, slowly, "is our human endeavor to form rules by which civilization

may continue. The chap that won't subscribe to the rules is a poor sportsman."

"Then I'm that chap!" Eve's voice was deep and firm.

Peter looked at her for a long time. "If I believed that," he said finally, "I'd feel as if we were fighting in France for a chimera. And when I reach that point, life will not be worth living."

Eve paused in a long stride. "Why place such responsibility on me?"

"There you are!" exclaimed Peter. "I think that's going to prove to be the weak point in you Devonshers. When you reach the tight place you look out for your own skin if you can and let the big thing be wrecked."

"Is that what I've tried to do in this valley?" demanded Eve.

"Pshaw!" drawled Peter. "As our race understands endeavor, you Devonshers are a failure. A huge failure because your potentialities are so much greater than most people's. You can't take punishment! You can't bear the responsibilities of your own mistakes."

Eve's cheeks were burning. "I wonder why you bother about me!" she exclaimed.

Peter answered coolly:

"It's your beauty and the something thoroughbred about you, and the disappointment in you. Nobody can let you alone. We all are bothering about you."

Eve did not speak for some time. She continued to pace the cell until Peter at last turned toward the door. Then she stepped in front of him and with a little smile held out her hand.

"Good-by, major! If only we might have met in France! As it is, you must remember me as one who tried little and failed much!"

Peter clasped her fingers between his two palms. "I'm not saying good-by, you know. It's only au revoir, for I shall come back this evening."

Eve shook her head. "I want to be alone this evening." Then with a sudden rush of inexpressible emotion in fine eyes and low-pitched voice she exclaimed, "Oh, if only it had been otherwise!"

Peter lifted her hand to his lips. "We'll force it to be otherwise," he said, and for once the drawl was entirely absent from his voice.

Eve flushed painfully and slowly withdrew her fingers. Neither spoke while the judge unlocked the door, nor did Eve make any reply when Judge Jones said:

"Poindexter will be back in the morning. I'm going over to the Junction with him this afternoon and the sheriff will take charge here."

Left alone Eve paced her cell or threw herself upon the cot for hours. She heard Sid come in after the dinner hour but he did not enter the adobe passageway until Lee Fu brought Eve's supper. Then he sent the Chinaman away while he watched Eve listlessly attack the meal.

"The valley's all stirred up about this," he said in a more genial tone than he had employed for several days.

"Better than a round-up celebration, I suppose." Eve's voice was calm.

"Won't be so different from one when the trial actually begins. All the old-timers will be here."

"Nice!" agreed Eve. "With me as the prize bucker, I suppose."

"Uhuh!" nodded Sid. "Feeling better about it now, since Jim Poindexter took hold, aren't you, Eve?"

Eve's extremely intelligent glance was lost on the sheriff.

"I'm beginning to be interested," she replied. "It may not be so bad."

SID heaved a great sigh. "That's the way to take it, Eve. By heck, you are a sport! You aren't sore at me any more, are you! After all, I had to do it."

"It's hard to stay sore at you very long, Sid."

"We always were pals, Eve. You remember it was me found you in the cedar woods the day after your father was buried. And the time Minnie and you were in trouble in school and you threatened to shoot her, I took your side, remember? You know"—Sid looked around carefully and then whispered—"you know, even if she is my daughter and I love her, Minnie's got a lot of cat in her from her mother's side of the house."

"She certainly doesn't get it from your side of the house. You Brownells have always been the best-tempered, kindest, most understanding people in the world."

A broad smile suffused Sid's ruddy face. Eve thoughtfully buttered a piece of bread and continued: "I've been thinking about

you a lot today, and the many kind things you've done for me. Sid, if it weren't for your women-folks, you'd be a big man. And some day, I think you are going to get out from under Minnie's influence and be big anyhow. With your voice and your geniality and gift for friendship, I don't see why you should stop at being sheriff, if Minnie wouldn't keep sidetracking you on other things."

Sid, seated on the end of the couch, leaned as far toward Eve as his great girth would permit. "Eve," he whispered, "I've often thought that, myself. You know my father, old Jackson, would have been an ambitious man if your grandfather hadn't—"

"I know," interrupted Eve. "We ought to talk that over, Sid, and— Well, it seems to me that even now something could be done to clear it up."

"Yes! Yes!" Sid was all eagerness; then his face fell. "There's Minnie with my supper. And Lee Fu'll be along, too, I suppose. I'll be back for a good talk this evening."

Eve nodded. Shortly after, Sid let Lee Fu in, hurrying to the office in response to a call from Minnie while the Chinaman gathered the dishes together.

"Can't put Missy in jail! Can't do!" he muttered.

"Lee Fu," whispered Eve, "about ten, have Shawnee saddled behind the alfalfa stack in the corral. Don't tell even mother."

The Chinaman stared, grinned; then as Sid rushed back his face became inscrutable.

"Can't put Missy in jail! Can't do!" he said as he carried the tray into the passage.

SID'S voice and Minnie's rose and fell in the office for an hour. Then the courthouse door slammed. A moment later the telephone rang in the office and a long conversation took place, of which Eve could not catch even an occasional word. She lay fully dressed on the cot, her hands clasped under her head, staring at the ceiling. She looked tired and forlorn. All her boyish bravado was gone. When Sid entered the cell his eyes were full of sympathy.

"Feel bad, Eve?" he asked.

She moved feebly to sit on the edge of the cot, and nodded her head in utter dejection.

The sheriff looked round the barren cell. "Is kind of a God-forsaken place, in spite of the paint. Listen, Eve, don't you want to see your mother?"

"I'm sick to see her," replied Eve, "but as long as I'm alive she shall not see me in a cell. When do you expect the judge back?"

"Not till morning. He just telephoned."

Eve glanced at her wrist watch. "It's nearly ten o'clock. He's making quite a stay at the Junction."

"Oh, he's not at the Junction. He and Jim Poindexter are up at Minnie's ranch going over things. Eve, don't you want I should go out and borrow some books for you?"

Eve shook her head. "I want my mother!"

Sid moved uneasily.

Eve sighed. "Of course, Willy Jones didn't want me brought here. He knew it was unnecessary. It's all Minnie's doings. Sid, if they don't have the trial soon, I'll go to pieces locked in this coffin. My heavens, you ought to build a pen outside where I could go and exercise!"

"I know it's awful hard on you, Eve. And I've already admitted what I really thought of Minnie."

"Sid," said Eve slowly as she looked the sheriff full in the eye, "I want you to take me over to see my mother. It won't take half an hour, and you can keep me handcuffed to your arm every minute. Maybe if I see her I can sleep tonight."

"How about that talk we were going to have?" asked Sid.

"I haven't forgotten. But I feel half suffocated. I know if I could just see mother and have that little walk, under the stars, I could tell you my plan better."

Sid, obviously torn between his fear of Minnie and his habit of obedience to Eve, coupled with his desire to reinstate himself in her good graces, stood staring and sweating. Eve rose quietly.

"Come, Sid, handcuff me and lead the way."

"You know I wouldn't handcuff you," mumbled the sheriff.

"You are a good scout, Sid!" Then with a real edge of authority in her voice: "Get going, please."

"You keep just in front of me all the time," said Sid, unlocking the door.

The air in the Plaza was sweet and cool.

Eve filled her lungs and strode rapidly ahead of Sid. It was past bedtime for Antelope Basin, but a light shone in the living-room of the tavern. When Eve and Sid entered, however, no one was to be seen but the Chinaman setting the table for breakfast. He looked up indifferently.

"Lee Fu, Missy Eve wants to see her mother. Go call her," ordered the sheriff.

"Old Missy gone to bed. Missy go in there," said Lee Fu, banging the sugar-bowl into place.

"Nothing doing. You go call her," insisted Sid.

The Chinaman shuffled to the end of the room and put his head into Mary Devonsher's door. Eve could not hear what he said, but almost immediately her mother, in a faded blue bathrobe, gray hair streaming, rushed through the door and into Eve's arms.

"Eve! Eve! Why wouldn't you let me see you?"

Sid turned his head away. Lee Fu shuffled into the kitchen. For a long moment the two women clasped each other, Mary sobbing heavily. Then there arose from the Plaza before the tavern a blood-curdling yell.

"Help! Murder! Murder!" and a fusillade of shots.

Sid bolted out of the front door. Eve whispered quickly: "That's only Lee Fu, mother! I'm running away. You'll hear from me!" And she slipped into the kitchen. She ran through the rear door, vaulted the gate to the corral, crossed this swiftly, silently vaulted the rear fence of the corral, rounded the huge alfalfa stack, pulled the reins over Shawnee's head and as he wheeled was in the saddle. She headed him due west, toward Sioux Hog Back, the shadow of which loomed hugely a quarter of a mile away.

Between the irrigated garden of the tavern and Hog Back there was only a black alkaline marsh, fairly dry at this time of year. Eve settled herself in the stirrups and gave Shawnee his head. He crossed the marsh, leaped through the sagebrush at the foot of the mountain and would have scrambled up its sheer front had Eve not turned him sharp to the right. There was no trail but the going through the sagebrush under the stars was not sufficiently difficult to slow Shawnee's pace.

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

THE shooting in front of the tavern continued at intervals until, rounding Hog Back, Eve hurtled out of earshot. Perhaps five miles through sagebrush, westward, then an abrupt turn to the north along the bed of a little creek that flowed smoothly over a gravel bed. This Eve followed more slowly when it entered an aspen grove, and when the aspens were engulfed by spruce and the stream began to boil over a rocky bed, she guided the horse to the bank and dismounted.

While Shawnee recovered his breath she went over the outfit Lee Fu had tied to the saddle. A blanket, a canteen, a frying-pan, bacon, tea, and three loaves of bread; her saddle gun and a canvas bag of cartridges, matches and a saddle ax. She adjusted the load carefully, then mounted and rode northward, through a heavily forested country that rose gradually toward the north. There was no trail. She rode by that instinct for the north that belonged to her passion for the wilderness.

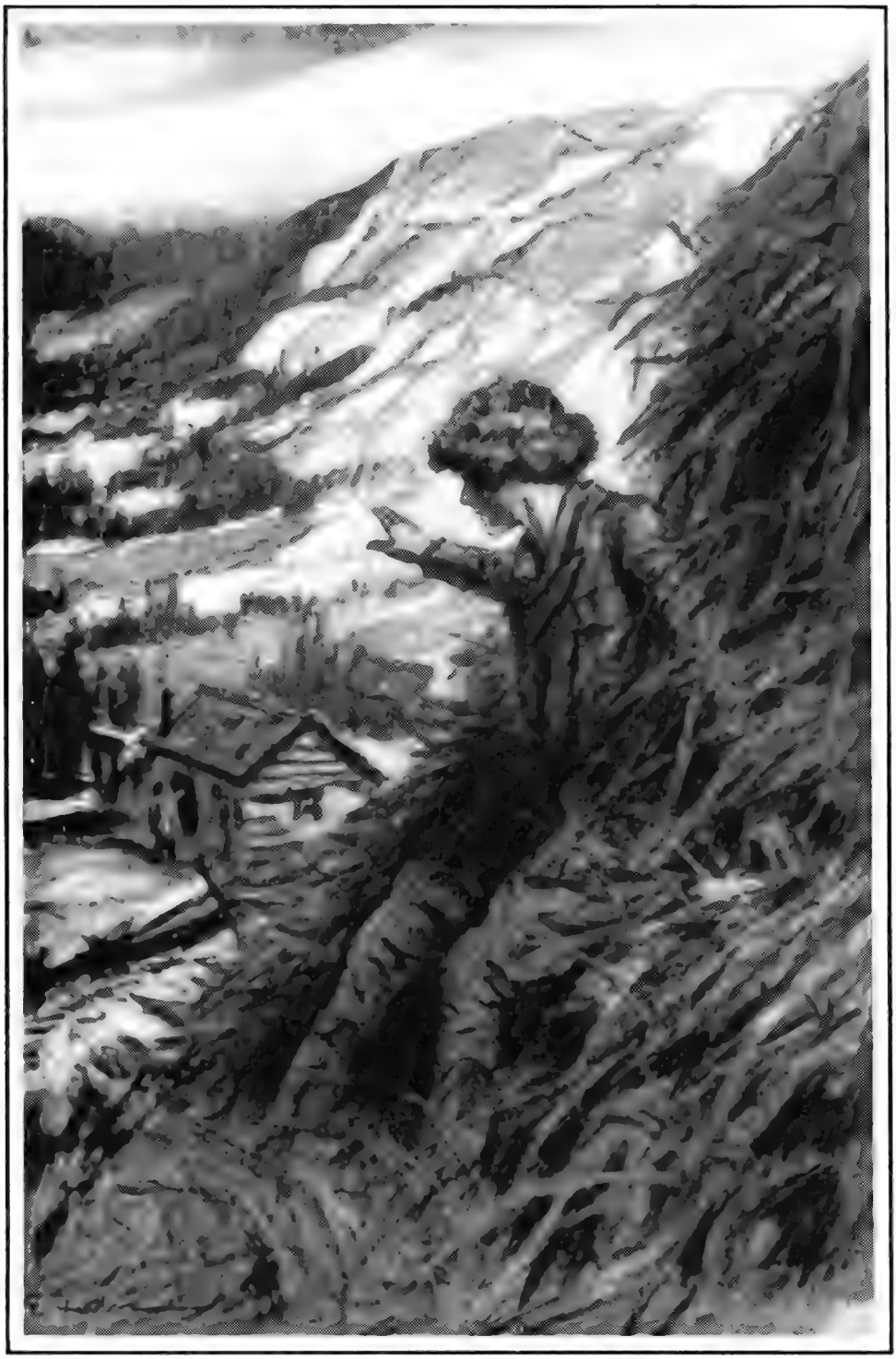
At dawn Eve paused in a tiny opening that gave a view only of sky. There was a thick carpet of grass, however, and a little spring beneath the roots of a juniper. She staked Shawnee in the grass and built a brisk clear fire of cones, over which she made tea and cooked bacon. She made a hearty breakfast, then stood in the grass waiting for the horse to finish his meal. Her eyes were sunken, and burned with blue flame. Her face was pale and her lips set.

"I'm going to Canada," she said aloud. "From Vancouver, I'll cross the world to France."

A bluebird answered ecstatically from the juniper.

Eve mounted and began the journey that was to last for many days.

It was an enormous undertaking. It would have been an impossible undertaking for any woman save one with the trail experience, the strength and the traditions possessed by Eve. It seemed for a time that her endurance was to be greater than Shawnee's, as if she were to go as a bird would go, straight to Canada. But when she had crossed the desolate brown plains over which swept the black lines of the Union Pacific, when she had pushed the wearied and emaciated Shawnee through barren cañon, over verdureless mountains



A call from the cabin door roused Eve from her contemplation. . . . "Wasn't doing you no good, frying in the sun," grumbled old Maine as she entered the dooryard.

and across wind-swept, sand-choked deserts, when she had swum him over swift-running streams and forced him along the bottom of mad river gorges four wild days, she halted at sunset of the fourth day in a clearing on the edge of the Wind River country.

The clearing sloped up to a grass-grown ridge. Along this crest, black against the flaming sky, a rider was herding several cattle. Eve waited until with whoop and curse he had brought them down into a small corral that crowded close to a small log cabin in the center of the clearing. Then she rode slowly out.

The rider was an old man, with a white beard sweeping his chest. At sight of Eve, he dropped the top bar of the corral and stared.

"Hello, Mr. Maine!" said Eve, casually. "I'm Eve Devonsher. I came up here bear-hunting with my father years ago."

"Well! Well!" the old man quavered. "Light, stranger, and look to your saddle! What you got, a camping party somewhere? You've rode that horse too hard."

"No, I'm on my own, Mr. Maine. Very much so! Do you think you can fix me up with some grub?"

"Only so-so, my dear. You'd better get what you need from the store. It's only down the mountain a little piece, twenty-five mile, about."

"I'm avoiding stores," said Eve. "Will you let me talk to you?"

"Sure! Sure!" cackled Maine. "Why, girl, didn't you know I'm reputed to be a hermit and not two folks a year get up here? Talk to me? Can it rain on parching sand? Come in! Come in! Turn that brute into the corral and give him oats, while I get some supper started."

Eve hung the saddle over the fence, fed the half-starved Shawnee and then entered the log cabin. A candle burned in a miner's candlestick which was stuck into the wall above a table. A bunk in the corner was piled with pelts. A kitchen stove glowed red and a smell of coffee and stew with onions in it gave a homely comfort to the general disorder.

The old man indicated a chair sawed from a barrel and upholstered with an old red saddle blanket. "Set, while I get this dished up. You can begin talking right off."

"You used to be a trapper at Fort Jason, Mr. Maine. You must remember my grandparent well."

"Girl, I'm eighty-six years old. I went through the Antelope massacre with old Carter. Soldiers came to help after we'd killed fifty-four Injuns. I'd rather have five trappers—old-time trappers—any day, than a hundred soldiers. This was a good state before they got it all tied up with laws and politics. Your grandfather now, he ran Fort Jason like a king over a kingdom. Never was so much prosperity before nor since. Heard your father died in hard luck."

"Yes," said Eve, soberly. "He had a bitterly unhappy life. The land that grandfather left him all went. Mother and I have only the tavern and ten acres left."

"This was a good country before they fenced it in," mourned the old trapper. "Draw up, girl, and eat the grub, such as it is. What brought you up here?"

BEFORE she touched the tin plate of stew, Eve told old John Maine the story that she had told Jim Poindexter. He hung eagerly on every syllable.

"And they don't believe you! Doggone it! Suppose you had shot Duncan! If he was like his grandfather he was a yaller Injun cur, anyhow. Used to come round with his Scotch twisted tongue and cheat the eyeballs off you. I hated his very toenails. Many's the time he got my whole winter's kill away from me. You done exactly right to come away. Where are you aiming for?"

"Canada!" Eve sighed in a relieved way and turned to the stew.

"That's a long trip but I guess you're right. I can send you along up to my brother. He's got a little mine he's working up on Hell Creek this summer. It's in the Big Horn country, maybe a hundred miles north. I can grub-stake you that far."

"I have the money to pay for it, you understand," said Eve, "but you can see how I prefer to avoid meeting people."

"I do so." He cleared his plate and lighted his pipe. "This Englishman, now! What kind of a fellow is he? Regular English?"

"A very fine man, I think. He's knocked around the world a great deal, so perhaps he's not so typically English as he might be."

"Don't you think it! Once English, always English. I wonder, is he any relation

to Sir John Colbaith, him that was governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in the old days? He was a smart man. The English always got along with the Injuns and the trappers. Part because they sent men over here that was trained to the work and part because they kept their word with 'em. It was us Americans got massacred and such. Your grandfather, as long as he stuck to the Hudson's Bay Company and its ways, he had no Injun troubles."

Eve listened attentively. "Just how did they handle the Indians differently from the Americans?" she asked.

"Oh, they sort of took care of 'em and bossed 'em," replied Old Maine, vaguely. "What did this fellow Colbaith say about the fix you'd got in?"

"He didn't believe me guilty," replied Eve.

"No? Hum! Well! Well! He's had a shock by your running away then."

"I don't see why that should make him think me guilty."

"Shucks, girl! Don't talk foolish! You showed you were afraid to stand trial and, if he is related to old Governor Colbaith, he won't understand that. That Britisher was the longest fighter I ever see and I've seen some good ones, Injuns and whites. He'd be patient and quiet-like and then, *whoosh!* He'd set his teeth and never let go. You understand I don't mean fist or gun fighting, I mean matters about the Hudson's Bay Company's business."

"You mean he could take punishment?" asked Eve, huskily.

"Yes! And give it, too. If this here Peter Colbaith is related to old John, you've got in pointedly wrong with him."

"I don't in the least care." Eve's voice was elaborately casual.

The old man eyed her. "Meaning that you do care. What are you going to do in Canada?"

"Oh, I'll get along, once I'm there. I'm wondering if I'd not better camp in the woods tonight? I've had no indications so far that any one is on my trail. Still, I'd stand a better chance to get away if I were not in the cabin."

"When you get ready to sleep, go up on the ridge and bed down in the old haystack up there. You look like your father. Got his temper?"

Eve laughed. "Something very much like it; but I can handle it better than I could as a child."

"He was a great hand to take to the woods when anything troubled him. I remember he let a horse of old Carter's get foundered once when he was a boy, and he was gone in the sagebrush three days before we found him."

"That sounds as if you thought he was a coward," exclaimed Eve, "and he was anything but that!"

"Any kid is a coward, specially if he had a fierce old dad like Carter Devonsher. When your father grew up he got all over it, of course."

"He never got over turning to the trail when he couldn't stand things any longer," she said thoughtfully. "I suppose—I suppose that's the same impulse that made Grandfather Devonsher leave England."

"He was the smartest man ever come to these parts, except Sir John Colbaith. Worst failing was, he couldn't see why all us folks wouldn't treat him like he was a king. . . . So the last of the Devonshers is runnin' off to Canada!"

Eve flushed. "What would you have me do?" she demanded.

"Just that! Just that!" replied old Maine, complacently. "No use taking punishment you don't have to. Specially if you're a woman. Women, somehow, don't work into things the way you expect a man to, though you'd kind of expect a Devonsher woman—"

Eve interrupted sharply. "You don't understand! I haven't a chance in the world to be or do anything down there in Antelope Basin."

"Why not?"

"Because my father was branded as a horse thief."

"You talk silly, girl! Nobody in Wyoming, specially down in your country, is going to damn a woman for that."

"But they did damn me, into deepest Hades," retorted Eve.

The old man grunted, unconvinced, and for a few moments there was silence. Then he demanded, abruptly, "How come you ain't married?"

"Oh, there are many reasons," replied Eve wearily, quite unoffended by the question, yet at once changing the subject. "So you think that by leaving, I've convinced them all that I'm guilty!"

"Sartin of it, of course!"

"But they were all convinced of it anyhow, except Major Colbaith!"

"Well, you can bet he's with the rest of 'em by now."

HE WAS brutally honest, this old man. Perhaps Eve found comfort in this fact. Perhaps because he had fought with her grandfather in the Antelope massacre, perhaps because she was sure of his unprejudiced understanding, he being old and an Oregon Trail man, she suddenly leaned toward him and said, "Were you ever locked in a cell?"

"Almost. Oncet. Down at Fort Jason."

"Almost, you say. What prevented?"

"Me! I prevented! By the limping piper, nobody'd ever get me into a cell alive. Why, girl, I strangled at the thought of it! A cell for a man that had lived like me, years, without a real roof over his head! It was like being in your coffin buried alive. No! No! I hog-tied the dogy who was trying to shut me up and I told old Carter what was what and then I vamosed. Hadn't done nothing anyhow but make a mistake in a horse brand. They couldn't shut me in a cell for that."

"That's what they did to me!" panted Eve. "That was how I felt. Yet you think I shouldn't have come away."

"You should have come away! Ain't I said so a dozen times? All I said was you showed yourself guilty by so doing."

"But I'm not guilty."

"No, of course you ain't and you didn't have call to take punishment for what you hadn't done. But—"

"Well?" impatiently from Eve.

"Nothing. I know jest how you feel but I can't feel justified and I don't know why. But you're a Devonsher and you're as welcome as the spring rain to anything I can do for you. You look awful tired. If I was you I'd go up and get me a long night's sleep."

Eve made her way slowly under the starlight to the alfalfa stack, and for the first night since her arrest, she slept deeply and without waking—ten hours of oblivion. The sun had blazed upon the stack for a long time before she opened her eyes and sat erect. She looked about her slowly while she mentally oriented herself. To the north, interminable forest, black-green, undulating in the unceasing wind. East and west, forest, with jagged, snow-capped mountain crests thrusting above the restless green surface. To the south, first old Maine's tiny ranch, then forest, then a wide stretch of purple and orange plains, dancing in the summer heat.

Eve's large-eyed gaze focused on these plains. A call from the cabin door roused her from her contemplation. She waved her hand, slid from the stack and swung lightly down the rough corral to the door-yard.

"Wasn't doing you no good, frying in the sun, so I called you," grumbled old Maine. "I been waiting for you for hours. You slept good, I guess."

"A wonderful sleep!" exclaimed Eve. "Mr. Maine, where can I wash up?"

The old man looked about. "Well, I just don't happen to have a wash-basin on hand just now, but—over back of the old stable yonder the spring water is right clear. You could wash there while I get you some breakfast."

Eve nodded and clambered down the yard to the old log stable. Behind it indeed was a spring bubbling to the brim of an ancient barrel. Eve slipped off her clothes and took a bath that brought new color to her cheeks, new light to her eyes.

When she came into the cabin, her host looked at her appreciatively and grinned as he said: "It's a crime to be as doggone old as I be. Draw up, girl. Eat and tell me your plans."

"I'm going south again," returned Eve, abruptly.

Old Maine stared at her. "Meaning just what?"

"That I'm going back to Antelope Basin."

"How come?"—setting the coffee-pot down with a bang.

"I'm not sure. All I know is that the things that you said to me last night must have crystallized in me while I slept. I'm going back."

The old man was much affected. "Now look here! Shucks! Don't you let anything I said drive you back. I never meant it so. You'll have a hell of a time, now, if you go back."

"I suppose so," said Eve, "but I'm going. I'm honest when I tell you I'm not sure why. Something is driving me. Shawnee

is pretty tired. Can you sell me a horse so that I can trail Shawnee?"

"Sell you nothing!" grunted old Maine. "What do you think I am? I'll loan you what I got, which ain't much, compared with that horse of yours. Tell you what, you take my little Nellie horse. She's a real traveler and I'll come down to the trial and fetch her back with me when it's over."

Eve whitened a little under her morning glow, but she nodded gratefully. "Then, if you'll help me make up a grub and fodder pack, I'll be on my way."

Old Maine eyed her curiously and there crept into his voice and manner a certain suggestion of courtesy which before had been lacking. "You sit still and I'll fix you up."

"I'm not at all tired," returned Eve. "I'd rather be busy."

They both were expert and within an hour, Eve, with Shawnee as pack-horse, was mounted on little bay Nellie. She stooped to give the old man her hand.

"Thank you, many, many times," she said soberly.

"No thanks due," replied old Maine. "Excitement's a godsend, up here, as you can see. I'll see you later."

EVE spurred Nellie and the start was made. But the old man called her to halt as she passed through the corral gates.

"I just wanted to say that I wish your grandfather, no, not your grandfather—I wish old Governor Colbaith could see you now."

"I don't!" cried Eve, smiling. Then she turned Nellie's obstinate little head south.

And thus again the long and lonely trail.

She was outfitted for a week and so although she kept a steady pace toward home she did not crowd either herself or her horses. She made her breakfasts leisurely and her noonings long. As she rode, she noted every detail of the marvelous Wyoming landscape that unfolded itself perpetually before her yearning gaze. It must have been to Eve a journey of tragic beauty.

And so, on a Sunday afternoon, she rode slowly around the base of Sioux Hog Back, crossed the garden back of the tavern and put her horses into the tavern corral. Then she walked through the kitchen into the living-room. Judge Jones, booted and spurred, was standing by the window talking to Mary Devonsher. When he saw Eve, his one eye blinked and he seized his fringe of whisker as though forced to keep some sort of hold on reality.

"Well," said Eve, "I have lighted and looked to my saddle. The next move is yours, Willy Jones!"

The next instalment of "The Devonshers" will reveal a man-to-man conflict vital in the early history of the Great Northwest—in June EVERYBODY'S, out May 15.

Stirring Adventure on Sea and Land

A Fine, Clean Tale With Vitality and Newness

The Citadel

By Joseph Husband

JOHN BUSH, rapid-fire in matters of adventure, slow-thinking in matters of love, is the hero of a tale laid back in 1814, in Haiti in the reign of King Christophe. An encounter with a British man-o'-war, imprisonment in the Citadel, promotion to a high position in the King's house—held by reason of his ability to read and write—these are only a few of the incidents in the experiences of John Bush. The tale is taken from a page of history, little known, but as rich in romance as any that has been written. Beginning in—

June *EVERYBODY'S* Out May 15

The Kneeling Cupid

In Which a Great Secret of Particular Interest to Patrons of Art Is Laid Bare

By Rafael Sabatini

THE lisping young exquisite in sulphur-colored silk smiled his tolerant disdain, and from the group behind him came sounds of a titter ill suppressed.

"And so you pronounce yourself an artist, eh?" he said. "An artist!"

The irony of his tone was not to be mistaken. At its sting, a faint color crept into the gaunt cheeks of the victim, a young man of not more than three and twenty, tall and vigorous, whose face, though bony and rugged, was yet handsome in a rough masterful way. A thick mane of lustrous black hair curled about his brow and fell in short waves to the nape of his powerful neck; his great eyes, deep-set under a massive brow, glowed with the ever-smoldering fires of a nature passionate in all things. He was dressed in black, but with an elegance which proclaimed that his presence here in the great cardinal's antechamber was by no means his first experience of courts. Rich fur trimmed his close-fitting doublet and lined the ample surcoat so loosely worn; a chain of silver, massively wrought and of exquisite workmanship, served him for a girdle, carrying the heavy Pistoja dagger which hung upon his hip.

He would willingly have drawn it now, and sheathed the blade in the windpipe of that smiling young gentleman in yellow. But he dissembled the ferocious lust. Though passionate, he could yet be patient. He answered quietly:

"Others have so pronounced me already—generously. But not perhaps more generously than my work deserved, Messer Gianluca."

Gianluca Sforza-Riario, the fair youth in yellow, led a burst of laughter, which drew the attention of other clients thronging the long pillared gallery.

"You were well advised, Messer Buonarroti, to come to Rome," he mocked. "Here you will certainly succeed. No artistic reticence will restrain you from bawling your wares in the marketplace, and here success comes to him who bawls loudest, and so attracts the vulgar, undiscriminating herd. Oh, you will find men enough in Rome, who, to their shame, are growing fat on art. The patronage of the ignorant enriches them. So may it fare with you, my friend."

Still the young artist kept his temper, though his hands were itching.

"Sir, you mistake my quality. Let me tell you that so far I have had no patron but one, and he was not a man whom any could call ignorant—Lorenzo, the great Lorenzo de' Medici. Had he lived, I should never have left Florence."

"Lorenzo!" Gianluca's eyebrows rose until they almost joined the yellow thatch above his shallow brow. "You will not tell me that Lorenzo de' Medici knew anything of art?"

Young Buonarroti gasped for breath. "How, sir?" he faltered.

"Ser Michelangelo, I desire to think well of you; but if you praise me the artistic perceptions of Duke Lorenzo you will render that impossible. A man of crude taste, leaning to the meretricious, to—to trivial things designed to trap the senses of—of just such men."

That was but the beginning. Continuing, the esthetic Messer Gianluca delivered himself at great length and in very elegant and imposing language of an address upon art,

under which young Michelangelo felt his mind to be reeling. Such great contemporaries as Pinturicchio and Verrocchio were tolerantly commended, which is to say that they were damned with faint praise; others as great were contemptuously dismissed—especially the prosperous ones, prosperity being in the eyes of Messer Gianluca the seal of worthlessness. Of the younger men the only one in whom he admitted possibilities was Leonardo da Vinci; but he confessed to grave misgivings; he doubted if the young man's talents would mature along commendable lines; he feared that he might succumb to work for profit, and thereby damn himself eternally as an artist.

NAUSEATED, Michelangelo fled the gallery and the palace, and began to ask himself should he not flee Rome as well, cursing the evil hour in which he had entered this city of self-sufficient fools.

You know the story of his boyhood: how at the age of fourteen he was apprenticed for a term of three years to the great Florentine painter, Domenico Ghirlandajo; how before the end of that term he had been drawn from painting to sculpture, and how he had fashioned a laughing faun which had caught the discerning eye of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The Duke had haled the boy out of the workshops of Messer Ghirlandajo and had installed him in the ducal palace. And young Buonarroti, uplifted and stimulated by this splendid patronage, had justified his noble patron.

He was barely twenty when Lorenzo died. Piero de' Medici, who succeeded him, found in crude materialism all that he required of life. There was an end to the patronage of artists. Michelangelo was out of employment. Casting about him, he lent an ear to the tales of the great opportunities afforded by the papal court under the prodigal and lavish Borgia pontiff, and of the great interest in art that was being quickened in Rome by the excavations which were daily bringing treasures of antiquity to light.

Lured by these stories, Buonarroti set out for the eternal city, armed with a letter of introduction from Piero de' Medici to Cardinal Sforza-Riario, who was widely famed as a dilettante, a collector, and a patron of the arts. Through the good offices of this exalted prince of the Church, Michelangelo hoped that he might even reach the foot of the papal throne.

So far, however, he had spent a month in vain solicitings, daily cooling his heels in the great man's antechamber whilst hoping ever more desperately for the audience in which he might present his letter, nauseated meanwhile by the atmosphere of the place and discussions upon art akin to that into which he had just been drawn. He began to realize that he was moving in a world of posturing dilettanti, of affected witlings, to whom mere performance in art was naught.

Meanwhile, idleness and the wasted days began to fret him. Also he perceived that at this rate his meager store of money would soon be exhausted. Therefore of late he had been turning his attention to immediate needs. He had modeled a dancing nymph, a thing of infinite grace and liveliness, although the subject was not perhaps one to which at that age he would naturally have turned. It afforded no scope for the vigorous anatomy which he loved to reproduce. The choice was entirely meretricious. He conceived that he fashioned something calculated to please these lascivious Romans, whose esthetic perceptions had been emasculated by their excessive worship of smooth antiquities, particularly the Greek. He bore it—still in the clay, since in those days he had no workshop in which to effect the transmutation—to one Baldassare della Balza, who kept a shop on the Ripa Vecchia, overlooking Tiber.

Many times he had passed the shop, on his way to the Sforza-Riario palace, in the Rione di Ponte, and invariably he had paused to study the sculptures exhibited, ancient and modern, in marble, in bronze, in lead and some in baked clay. But this was the first time that he ventured to cross the threshold in his quality as a sculptor.

He was well received, his nymph commending him to one as shrewd and critical as the dealer. This Baldassare, an untidy, elderly man with long, greasy locks of grizzled hair, straggling beard and a pendulous nose that betrayed his Semitic origin, avoided confinement to the ghetto by proclaiming himself a Christian, and was left in peace to pursue his trade by the tolerant Roman government of Borgia days.

"THE work is good—very, very good," Baldassare deliberately and generously pronounced. "I do not know a sculptor working now who could do better. And that is much to say, particularly to so young a man. But if I buy"—he spread his hands, and looked up pathetically—"where shall I find me a buyer in my turn?"

It seemed to Michelangelo a foolish question.

"Surely among your patrons there will be some who know good work and desire to possess it. How else could you live and drive your trade?"

The little dealer answered him by a cackle of sardonic laughter. Then he swung round. From a shelf behind him he snatched a marble Hermes, standing some two feet high, and placed it on the table before the young artist.

"Is not that a thing of beauty?" he demanded. "Is it not good work?"

It was good work indeed, a figure not only of entrancingly graceful proportions but so full of arrested movement as to seem almost alive. Michelangelo's admiring eyes devoured it, his long delicate fingers caressed it lovingly.

"Superb," he murmured. "The work of a master, my friend."

"Of one who will become a master," the dealer corrected. "At present he is young, like yourself, able and eager, gifted with eyes to see and fingers to reproduce—a great artist, a great craftsman. His name is Torrigiano. If he lives that name will be famous one day."

"If he lives?" quoted Michelangelo.

"I mean if he does not die of starvation, as well he may. This lovely thing has stood in my shop eleven months. To each of my patrons in turn have I shown it—to the great Cardinal Ascanio, to the Princess of Squillace, to the Lord of Mirandola, who has great taste and knowledge, to the young Duke of Gandia, to Cardinal Sforza-Riario, who prides himself upon his judgment and whose collection of sculpture is the greatest in Rome. I have implored them to offer me any price in reason. But—this thing of beauty remains to grace my shop, while a hundred inferior things are sold, simply because they are old—antiquities dug out of the earth."

Contempt increased in Baldassare's voice. "The truth is, they know nothing of art, these people, and their ignorance leers foolishly through their pretense of knowledge. I am sorry, my young sir. Your nymph is worthy to stand beside this Hermes; but having discovered that I cannot sell the one, I am assured that I could not sell the other."

Michelangelo departed sick at heart and rather angry: angry with these empty, pretentious Romans; angry with himself that he should have left Florence merely to be lectured upon art by those fools who thronged the antechamber of the illustrious Sforza-Riario, the cardinal who set up for a great patron of art, a great dilettante, and yet could pass by such a piece of work as the Hermes of Torrigiano. Clearly this man upon whose patronage Michelangelo had been depending was no better than the rest, no better than those posturing apes who chattered so glibly in his antechamber. What hope then remained for him?

On that thought he suddenly checked, there in the narrow unpaved street. And then upon a second thought that followed swiftly, he swung round, and went in great strides back to the shop of Baldassare.

"Sir," he asked, "has it never occurred to you in the pursuit of this trade of yours, that fools were born into the world to be turned to account by men of worth?"

Baldassare smiled knowingly and rubbed his plump hands. "What, then?" he asked, realizing that what he had heard was no more than a prelude.

Instinctively Michelangelo drew nearer and lowered his voice. Anger and contempt vibrated in his every word. But of those emotions Baldassare took no heed. Emotion he knew to be unprofitable. His mind was entirely given to the matter of the young artist's utterance, and as he listened he continued to smile and rub his hands, occasionally nodding his approval.

"WHAT a dealer you would have made had you not been born a sculptor!" Baldassare commended him at parting, and than this the little Jew could hardly have bestowed higher praise upon him.

Despite the praise, Michelangelo did not exchange the precarious pursuit of art for the more secure ways of trade; and as week succeeded week, he was still daily to be seen in the antechamber of Cardinal

Sforza-Riario awaiting that interview which it seemed would never be vouchsafed him. And almost daily was he baited by the Cardinal's nephew and the other loungers. But he had grown inured to their veiled taunts and open sneers. He smiled, and rarely troubled to strike back, nor was anger ever more than momentarily kindled in those great dark eyes of his.

One day a life-sized Antinous made its appearance—a new acquisition of the Cardinal's of which he was so inordinately proud that he proposed for a season to leave it in his anteroom, where it could be more generally seen and admired than in the gallery set apart for his collection.

Michelangelo came to admire it with the rest, but soberly, without transports such as all were indulging. Messer Gianluca delivered to the young artist, and to all the others who stood respectfully listening, a lengthy and learned dissertation upon the esthetics of the work.

In the end he turned to Buonarroti.

"And what," he asked, with that faint sneering superior smile of his, "is your own judgment, Messer the Sculptor?"

"It is very beautiful," was the quiet answer. "Indeed, its fault is that it is too beautiful."

"Its fault?" Gianluca's voice grew shrill. "Can excess of perfection be a fault?"

"Excess of perfection is always a fault," Michelangelo answered him contemptuously. "There is no vice so horrible as excess of virtue."

"You deliver the treasures of your judgment in the form of paradoxes whose meaning perhaps eludes such humble wits as ours." An approving purr commended the subtlety of Messer Gianluca's sarcasm.

"I'll endeavor to be plain. This thing is beautiful, but as a woman is beautiful rather than a man. It is of an exceeding smoothness. The delineation of the anatomy is too vague. The face is perfect; too perfect for significance; a man with so lovely a countenance may be a beast, or a fool, or both; he can hardly be aught else. Is that what the sculptor intended? I doubt it. The limbs lack vigor; almost they lack shape; they are a woman's limbs."

"Ah, but listen, listen all, I beg!" shrilled Gianluca. "An artistic Daniel is delivering judgment. And his canon, it seems, is that art is to express only brawn and muscles."

A roar of laughter from the sycophantic crowd utterly drowned Michelangelo's reply, and drove him in anger from the place. Violence, he swore, was the only argument to use with these imbeciles, never suspecting how well Gianluca's mockery was serving him at that very moment. For the young man, flushed with victory, went with the tale of it to his illustrious uncle. Into the Cardinal's ready ear he poured the absurd story of this young Florentine who for three months now had haunted the cardinalitial antechambers, awaiting audience. He spoke almost hotly of the man's egregious vanity, of his effrontery, so great that he dared to pronounce an adverse judgment upon a matchless Antinous. Together uncle and nephew laughed over the man's ridiculous pretensions—as interpreted by Gianluca.

"Decidedly," said the Cardinal, "I must receive this fellow. He may afford me amusement, and it is possible that I may afford him artistic salvation."

And so next day, when in accordance with his habit the young Florentine lounged into that now too familiar antechamber, a chamberlain in black velvet advanced to meet him, to inquire was he Messer Michelangelo Buonarroti of Florence, bearer of a letter to the illustrious Cardinal Sforza-Riario from Duke Piero. And when young Buonarroti, a little taken aback by this sudden conclusion of that purgatorial term, replied in the affirmative, he was respectfully ushered into a small room with gilded walls and an ultramarine ceiling, lighted by a single window beside which there was a richly carved writing pulpit. At this was seated the illustrious cardinal—a tall, thin, white-faced man, whose narrow eyes looked with assumed benignity upon the young sculptor who bent the knee to him. He held out a white emaciated hand, on which glowed the sapphire of his rank, and Buonarroti humbly kissed it as his duty was.

"I HAVE but learnt from my nephew Gianluca of the long trial of your patience here," said a cold, level voice. "I should earlier have been informed of your presence."

Michelangelo mumbled amiabilities, proffering his letter. The prelate took it, broke

the seal, and spread the parchment, motioning his visitor to rise. He reclined in his capacious, high-backed chair to read the commendations of Duke Piero, and as he read his thin lips curled a little. Lastly he looked over the top of the sheet at the young artist.

"His Magnificence here speaks of you as a young man of whose great talents his exalted father Lorenzo had a very high opinion."

"I had the honor to work in the ducal palace for three years, illustrious."

The Cardinal smiled a little and sighed. "You realize that from Florence—the Florence of Lorenzo de' Medici—to curial Rome it is a far cry in matters of art; that what there may be accounted masterly, is here often considered elementary, especially in these days when the antiquities that are being brought to light are serving us as a school for the education of our sense of beauty."

Michelangelo's lips writhed in a sneer, despite himself. Here was the same cant that came to nauseate him on every hand. Here indeed, as he should have known, was one of the very fountains of that cant. He attempted no answer, but waited for the Cardinal to proceed.

"The Duke here tells me that you are both painter and sculptor."

"As a painter," the youth replied abruptly, "I may not be of much account. I do not think I am. There are many better."

"Ah!" A catlike smile distended the thin lips in that white face which Michelangelo was finding odious. "And as a sculptor?"

"As a sculptor I am not ashamed of what I do, and I am artist enough to know of what I should be ashamed. It is as a sculptor that I offer myself to your Magnificence, whose discrimination in art is so well and widely known. If here at the court of the Holy Father—"

A white hand waved him into silence.

"I have warned you, young sir, that the standards here are high. You are still very young and must lack experience."

"Artists, illustrious, are created by God, not by experience. By this I mean that the artist is born."

"The assertion has been made before. *Poeta nascitur, non fit.* Perhaps you remember. But come." The tall figure, clad from head to heel in flowing scarlet, rose. "Even though it may not lie in my power to find you employment, yet you shall not be utterly at the loss of the time you have spent here. I will show you my collection of statuary. It is the most perfect and ample collection in Rome and probably in the world. To behold it is an education in art, my friend. Come."

Familiarly he took the young man by the arm, and conducted him to a door at the opposite end of the room, where an usher waited. The man opened the door, and they passed out into a long gallery lighted along its length by tall windows that opened upon the inner courtyard of the palace. Facing these windows stood ranged along the gallery from end to end the treasures of sculpture which the Cardinal had assembled at the price of several princely fortunes. In all that collection there was little that was modern. It was made up almost entirely of pieces brought from Greece and of others excavated in Rome, in which Greek influence was strong.

SLOWLY they moved along the gallery, the Cardinal discharging the office of showman, and discoursing at length on the beauty of each work in turn. Here it was the fall of draperies, there the vigor of limb, there again the beauty of a face and there the general liveliness of the conception, that he desired his guest to observe. And Michelangelo observed faithfully as he was bidden, swallowed his resentment of this patronage of himself, an artist, by one who in the world of art held no place save as a buyer, and spoke no word the while in answer. Observing this, the Cardinal began to assume that the young man's arrogance was being properly humbled.

"You are silent, my friend," he said at last.

"I am listening to your Magnificence," answered Michelangelo, striving to exclude the irony from his voice.

"Oh, and something more. Confess that you stand abashed before such works as these. You realize that there is no man living today capable of producing any single piece that adorns this gallery."

"There are certainly not many."

"There is none, my friend. None. Believe me. I know. I have devoted my life

to the study and contemplation of art. What I tell you of art, you may believe."

THEY had come midway down the gallery, and they were standing before a slim boyish figure in old marble that was stained and darkened by the salts of the earth in which it must have lain for centuries. It was less than life size, presenting a stripling of ten or eleven whose limbs were just beginning to assume virility and strength. The figure was curiously poised, one knee touching the ground, the head tilted aside, and the hands widely apart, the right hand high above the head. About the lovely face—almost too virile for so young a body—the hair clustered in thick short curls.

Michelangelo's eyes had quickened with sudden interest the moment that they beheld it, and this the Cardinal had observed.

"Aha!" he laughed. "You begin to profit, I see. You begin to discern the admirable for yourself."

The artist wheeled to face him, his eyes glowing, his face flushed. The dilettante's insolence was almost incredible. Yet Michelangelo controlled himself.

"What—what does it represent?" was all he asked.

"It is a kneeling Cupid. Not Cupid as any of your moderns would represent him, round, shapeless and chubby; but a clean-limbed, active Cupid, a miracle of grace and vigor. He is kneeling, you see, in the act of taking aim. The bow has gone—lost. But it is not missed; almost, indeed, can you see it, so perfect is the poise of the arms."

"And your Magnificence says that it is old, this—an antiquity?" quoth Michelangelo in a voice that was small as if awed.

The Cardinal stared at him, amazed by his stupidity. A faint smile of disdain overspread his white face.

"Look at it," he commanded. "And take your answer from the figure itself. As your experience widens in your art you will come to understand, as I do, that no sculptor since Phidias could have wrought so beautiful a thing. Observe it, examine it closely. I promise you that it will bear inspection." Sighing, he placed a hand upon the young man's shoulder. "When you, my young friend, can make something that is even remotely comparable with this, you may depend upon me to set your feet upon the road to fortune."

Again the young sculptor swung to confront the great patron. And his handsome rugged face was pale.

"Your Magnificence makes me that promise?" he cried.

The Cardinal smiled his tolerance of this impetuosity. "I have made it."

"Then by your gracious leave I shall claim its fulfilment this very day."

The Cardinal looked down his nose. The artist explained himself.

"I have at home a piece of clay that your Magnificence will confess to be no whit inferior to this marble."

His Magnificence exploded into laughter. "You have in abundance the modern quality of effrontery, young sir," he said. "But I'll indulge you. Bring me your clay, and let us see this art of which you boast so confidently."

Michelangelo departed in haste. The Cardinal went to laugh first to himself and later with his nephew over the audacity of this young Florentine.

"I had thought," he said, "to chasten and educate him by a display of those treasures. Instead—"

"They are all the same, these moderns," answered Gianluca. "Ignorant, crude in their work, and self-sufficient in their estimate of it. They need humbling, chastising."

The Cardinal nodded. "It is a duty, and a duty that I shall perform today."

"Let me be present," pleaded Gianluca. But the Cardinal, having considered, shook his head. "That were too uncharitable."

And so when the sculptor returned, staggering into the Cardinal's presence under the burden of a figure swathed in sackcloth, the Cardinal was alone to receive him. Michelangelo begged, and the Cardinal indulgently consented, that he should uncover his figure in the gallery itself, alongside of the Cupid with which it challenged comparison.

SMILING, the Cardinal accompanied him. Smiling, he stood by while Michelangelo removed the sackcloth. Then suddenly, as the clay figure was revealed, and the sculptor stepped aside and half round to face his host, the smile perished on the Cardinal's white face. He craned his neck; his brows

were drawn together, and some three or four times his narrow eyes glanced from clay to marble and from marble to clay in uncomprehending anger. For saving that the material of which each was fashioned was different, no other slightest difference was discernible between the two. In every line and lineament the marble was the very counterpart of the clay.

In Sforza-Riario's eyes bewilderment became mingled with anger. A dull flush suffused his pallid sunken cheeks.

"What imposture is here?" he demanded harshly.

Michelangelo laughed, no whit abashed.

"The imposture that was necessary to make you dilettanti believe that at least one artist lives who may measure himself against antiquity, who need not fear comparison with Phidias. It was Phidias your Magnificence named, I think. No sculptor since Phidias, you said, could have fashioned so beautiful a thing. And yet, with these two hands I fashioned it." And again he laughed as he thrust forward those strong nervous hands of his for the great man's inspection.

"YOU fashioned it?" The Cardinal's voice shrilled upward, while his shaking hand pointed to the marble. "You—you fashioned that kneeling Cupid? Buffoon! Impostor! What are you saying? That Cupid has lain in the earth perhaps a thousand years. It was excavated—"

"From Baldassare della Balza's garden, where I had buried it less than a thousand hours before. All the demand in Rome is for antiquities. There is no beauty save in antiquities. To live, therefore, it was necessary that I should supply antiquities. And I supplied them. There are dyes and salts that in a few days will act upon marble as would mother earth in the course of centuries. The Cupid's missing bow I broke off when the modeling was completed. Does your Magnificence still doubt? Then look at this." He tilted the clay figure and pointed to an inscription on the base—a single word in Greek characters. "Aggelos—the Greek for Angelo: Michael-Angelo. My signature for this occasion. You'll find that, too, upon the base of the marble if your Magnificence will look."

But his Magnificence did not need to look. Evidence enough did he behold already, and such was his shame and mortification that he appeared to shrink under the artist's smiling eyes. Nor was this yet the end.

"It is not the only piece in this collection that my own hands have fashioned. It is but one of three antiques that in the last two months I have supplied to Baldassare, and all of which your Magnificence has purchased. All of which your Magnificence has widely praised in Rome, and by the possession of all of which your Magnificence's reputation as a collector has been enhanced."

Sforza-Riario found his voice at last. "I have been swindled," he choked, "swindled by that infamous Baldassare."

"Swindled, indeed. But not by Baldassare. By your own excessive predilection for the old to the contempt of the new." Then Michelangelo paused, and meeting the venomous glance of the prelate's eyes he continued gently in another tone: "Yet there is no need to publish abroad your error and expose you to the ridicule of the world. Considering the merit of the work, it is not extraordinary that your Magnificence should have been deceived. And none need ever know of it. Your great reputation as a collector and a dilettante in art need not suffer. There was a promise that your Magnificence made me. If I could fashion anything remotely comparable with this kneeling Cupid, you said—"

"I would make your fortune. Yes." The Cardinal clutched him by the wrist. "And so I will, if you can hold your tongue."

Michelangelo bowed low, not without a suspicion of mockery.

"Should I forget to practise discretion where my gracious patron is concerned? If your Magnificence will but fulfil your promise—"

"Tomorrow," said Sforza-Riario, "I present you to his Holiness the Pope."

"And the recommendation of so exalted an art critic makes it certain that his Holiness will give me employment?"

"As you say," the Cardinal answered him through writhing lips.

The Florentine bowed again. Baldassare was right. There was a great dealer lost to the world when Michelangelo turned his wits to art.

"ONE last thing, my lord. Would you tell me how much you paid Baldassare for this and the other two pieces you lately bought from him?"

The Cardinal told him. He swore a little under his breath, which restored to Sforza-Riario some of his lost humor.

"I gather," said he, "that I am not the only one whom Baldassare has swindled."

"That is true," said Michelangelo. "But to take permanent advantage of me, one must be exceedingly alert."

"I can well believe it," the great man sighed, and on that they parted, if not exactly friends, most certainly accomplices.

And that evening Michelangelo took his way to the little shop in the Rione di Ponte.

"*Olà*, Baldassare! You rogue, I have found you out," he greeted him. "The Kneeling Cupid, the nymph and the faun were sold by you to Cardinal Sforza-Riario for fifteen thousand ducats. Don't perjure yourself in denials, you scoundrel. I have it from himself. Peace, man! Our compact was that we should share equally, and you swore to me that you sold each of those pieces for a thousand ducats. I might strangle you. But you're not worth it. Instead I'll trouble you for six thousand ducats, the rest of my share, and two thousand more as compensation for the swindle."

"Oho!" crowed Baldassare. "Oho! My fine Florentine cockerel! And if I refuse?"

"If you refuse I shall go straight to the Cardinal and confess the imposture that we have jointly practised. The Cardinal will compel you to disgorge all the money, and will then have you jailed, if not hanged."

And Baldassare, because with all his astuteness he did not gauge human vanity as accurately as Michelangelo, nor perceive that this vanity afforded him a safe shield from any such reprisals, at once gave way to this young man whose wit had already planted his feet firmly upon the road to that fortune which his talents deserved.

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The Odyssey *of* Oliver Jones

How the Square Peg Escaped from the Round Hole and Found His True Place in Life. A Story That Everybody's Believes to Be Different

By Dale Collins

Illustration by Lester Ralph

THE western world had no niche for Oliver Jones. It took the years of his life, and gave him in return scant food for his body and none at all for his soul. It grayed his hair and his heart; its hurrying feet trampled him down into the mud of the humdrum. But one day Oliver Jones packed his three new trunks, and journeyed into another world, into a world of jade and blossom, into a world where sun and moon were his companions.

This is his Odyssey.

It opens grayly, with Oliver Jones in his gray back room, caressing his gray mustache, regarding the obvious fact that he would never be thirty-nine again, bitterly wise in the knowledge that the barrenness of life had aged him ten years beyond his span. And he saw, as he stared at the garish pattern of the wall paper, that he didn't matter at all, that if he were dead none would be the wiser or the sorrier, save Mrs. Alsop, the hard-faced, weary woman who collected his board money.

Some other Jones, just as tired and equally gray beyond his years, would teach his class as little, and seek like him to dominate youth—and know in his heart that he had failed. Youth would shuffle and yawn, and grin when his back was turned, and go marching on and out into life, forgetting him, heedless.

New faces would be ranged before him—always young faces—and he would stand in the same position, but always a little older. Oliver Jones felt a great sorrow for the man who would have to take his place. And then he realized that his pity was wasted, for he would be in his own place tomorrow and the day after and for as many days as they would allow before he grew too old. Then what would happen to him? He couldn't see.

He sighed, and his gray eyes were averted from the wall to regard the worn back of his ugly, ill-covered chair.

Life held more for most people. He couldn't understand it at all. He recalled his boyish ambitions, when life had seemed full of places waiting for him, and he had had only to choose. It had seemed good to be a learned man, and shape the world's mind. He smiled with weak grimness behind his gray mustache. There had been a mistake somewhere. The places weren't there. Somebody else had always stepped into them. The world had gone surging by him, intent, keen and cruelly full of strife. Oliver Jones had gone to the wall, had been pushed aside, left to wonder and look on, and train—forsooth!—vigorous young animals for the battle in which he himself had met defeat.

He sighed again because he could not attribute his failure to vice. He had not even the consolation of the sinner: he could not repent. He could only wonder. He,

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Oliver Jones, with nothing behind him and nothing ahead at thirty-nine, could reproach himself for nothing—could promise himself nothing.

His puzzled eyes studied his reflection in the smeared, cracked mirror on the mantel. How lonely he looked in that world of glass! No place for him in the real world, only himself in the mirror. The shadow of another man was more real than he, mused Oliver Jones. He was not even a good teacher.

He wanted beautiful things, peace and quiet, escape.

The door sprang open without so much as a warning knock, and Mrs. Alsop's daughter burst into the room. Oliver Jones started, and stared at her with repugnance. His thoughts had been dull enough, but she was worse than they, this young slattern, untidy and ill-favored, a living symbol of his dreary life.

"Letter f' you!" she said, and fled out again, showing a hole in the heel of her stocking.

Curiosity was in her eyes, because letters came seldom for the second-floor landing. But she couldn't wait. Oliver knew why. Her young man was waiting for her. He stood forgetful of the letter, before the astounding truth that the world had a place for the drab Aggie Alsop, and had sent somebody to be interested in her, while he passed unheeded.

Then he recalled that he held a letter, which was a novelty. He looked dubiously at the envelope. He had no friends, nor even creditors. Who could be writing to him, to forgotten Oliver Jones? Suspicion filled him. He distrusted this intruder. Why couldn't he be left alone to solve his riddle?

HE OPENED the envelope, and drew out a single sheet of paper headed with a firm's name.

His mild eyes stared at it, and then it fluttered from his hands, which still held their pose as though their muscles had been slain. With a jerk he took off his glasses, and set them on his nose again. He picked the letter up. His glasses were still dirty—he could not see it properly.

The room filled with mist, through which flashed rainbows and will-o'-the-wisps. The mist hazed about, danced rigadoons, choked his throat, carried its scintillating gleams through the gray house of his mind. He sat down heavily in the chair, staring at the paper with his mouth wide open and his eyes blind. But he knew what it said now. He knew the words, though he could not decide quite what they meant, or whether they had any meaning at all.

Oliver Jones mastered his wits.

Messrs. Harris, Wilson and Harris, solicitors, regretted to inform him that his brother, Mr. Trevor Jones, was dead. That didn't matter. His brother Trevor meant nothing. He had found his place and grown rich and great. He had swept on with the rest of the world, and forgotten Oliver Jones in his backwater. But then—and this was where his mind struggled—Messrs. Harris, Wilson and Harris grew suddenly a little more cheerful in their dry-as-dust style, as they proceeded to inform him that—that—his brother had remembered him in his will to the extent of £1500. There was one condition: The money had to be spent upon a world tour, his late brother, they recorded, being of the opinion that "Oliver should see the world to broaden his mind and learn something which was not out of books."

Messrs. Harris, Wilson and Harris trusted that they would hear from Mr. Jones at his earliest convenience, and that he would not find difficulty in fulfilling the conditions of the bequest. They also begged to remain his obedient servants.

Gradually he saw the vital thing, eliminating the prim phrases which came from Messrs. Harris, Wilson and Harris, and retaining only the amazing splendor with which his brother—dead and in his grave—had riddled his life. He saw the gray walls of his room crumble at the touch of a dead hand, the gray scheme of his life tinged with the glorious hues of sunrise, the grayness of his years colored with the imperial purple of adventure. In the quiet of his room he felt that the world had checked, and now gave heed to him. Little by little he understood.

His elbows rested on his knees and his white hands trembled so that the magic thing in his grasp crinkled and chuckled, and his eyes looked through the wall paper into heaven.

Oliver Jones could not dance, nor could he sing. He had no means of expressing

his joy, but although he was inarticulate he was crazed with wonder.

And when he had the thing clearly in his head he regarded it with sinful zest. He was so glad that Trevor had sent his gift like that; had taken the spending of it out of his hands; had controlled his life from the mold in which he slept. Oliver Jones must have made the emptiness of the future secure with all that money, have banked it as the very necessary provision for the rainy day—and then gone on.

But Trevor, big, pushful, abrim with the world's vitality, would not have him do that. Trevor had decreed that he should be a spendthrift, an adventurer, a magnificent voyager upon the face of the globe. Trevor had arrayed him in the glory of Columbus, in the might of Bonaparte. He might have gone on existing, but Trevor's dead hand gave him wealth and commanded him that he should live.

Ten years fell from him, and he paced the room with light and buoyant steps, head held high, eyes bright with tears and youth, chest breathing deeply the air of all the world.

"Oh, my God!" he cried. "This is a miracle, for a live man is dead, but a dead man wakes to resurrection!"

It was in this fashion that Oliver Jones came to the packing of his three new bags.

THE steamer went away from Port Said, spinning a silver path upon the waters. The sun poised ere it plunged down into the infinity of the sea. The jabbering Arabs in their dhows drifted astern and were heard no more. The ship shivered with reawakened life, and on either hand the limitless sand closed in upon her. Away in the distance the purple mountains crouched at their sunset prayers.

Oliver Jones stood solitary at the rail, watching the gates of the western world swing closed. It did not seem they closed behind him, but rather behind the ship and all those other people who were leaving kith and friends and homes behind them down the silver and blue lane of water. They could not close behind him, because he had never been of the western world. He had found no place in it; it did not know that he had gone.

Clad in his new glory, he had passed through it, had looked upon it, had fed on its wonders, but it had given him no recognition. He had been so certain that with his heels winged with Trevor's magic he would walk with his fellows, and would find a place in the world's scheme! But his uncunning feet lacked practise, and even with the aid of Trevor Jones, the great man who was dead and yet ruled his destiny, he could not come into possession.

Europe had seen his purse and had danced for him, revealing beauty and wealth of treasure. He had seen, he, the new Bonaparte, where Napoleon slept in marble pomp, yet humbled even as Trevor; he had seen, he, the new Columbus, the house in which the Genoese had eaten the bread of life; he had seen, he who sought beauty, the Venus of Milo rising magnificent in her cellar home. These things he had seen and much besides. Wheedling guides had come to him upon the boulevards and offered to lead him to incredible wickedness prepared for his especial delight. Rome had taken him back into the days which had been his dearest dream since his childhood. Venice had rocked him on the waters of romance. He had beheld men betting more than all his wealth upon the whim of a ball.

Through all this Oliver Jones had passed, handed on from guide to guide, expressed from wonder to wonder. Before the tremendous machine of Continental travel he had stood abashed, and it had picked him up and churned him through its myriad wheels, and lightened his purse and stuffed his mind, and turned him out again, bewildered, floundering, still lost.

Only those who had taken his money had been interested in him. He had dwelt so long in the schoolroom that he had lost the power of association with his fellow men. They stamped him as a funny, harmless little chap, or noticed him not at all. They were all very busy living full days, and the machine through which they poured occupied all their attention. Had Oliver been young, or rich, or famous, or amusing, or wicked, they might have discovered him. But he was none of those things. He was an enthralled shadow whose only claim to be among them was that a ghost had willed it.

Once, in a dining-car, a black-eyed lady pointed him out as the little man who looked as if he were searching for something

he knew he couldn't find, whose persistence puzzled even himself. She was wiser than she knew. Oliver Jones, younger now, and engaged upon the great adventure of his life, was a seeker for the place he could never find.

THE steamer went on, and it was the sands and not the sea which took the sun. The dark came emblazoned with stars. Out of Asia a night breeze sighed, breathing peace upon Oliver Jones, who stood staring into the desert where man was born.

And presently a booming gong called him down to dinner.

He was the silent one at the table. The others chattered on all manner of subjects, knowing little and caring less of what they talked. Oliver Jones, watching his plate, heard them in envious amazement. He heard them announce fallacies as facts, utter half truths with oracular confidence, reveal wide knowledge of unessentials in the firm belief that these things mattered; but, although he knew enough to realize all this, he had neither the courage nor the skill with which to deny, or explain, or castigate. Wondering at their glibness, he was not content to know them wrong in his heart and yet was unable to take his place among them even as an equal.

"You don't play bridge, Mr. Jones?" he heard the dark, stout woman ask suddenly.

He was so seldom in their debates that he started guiltily.

"No!" he confessed.

"That's just as well," said the stout woman, "we may be able to get you to make up a four for Mah Jong. Mr. Heaton has gone back to his old love!" She did not explain that Mr. Heaton had gone back to bridge because he had learnt already that it was not in the social scheme, on that eastbound ship, for a man of the western world to be in the company of Eurasians.

Mr. Jones looked unhappy.

"I'm afraid I'm not very good at games," said he. "I have never learnt Mah Jong."

But the stout woman had found a victim. "There's plenty of time ahead of us; we're in the East now. We'll teach you the game in no time, and you'll love it!"

And Oliver Jones, surprised to discover that he was a possibility as a playfellow, agreed with humble eagerness. This done, he found himself recognized, and treated with something akin to respect, for a shrewd chief steward having a place to fill at the "doubtfuls' " table had marked Mr. Jones down as one who would be none the wiser where he sat.

Thereafter, timid in the blaze of the electric light, Oliver Jones sat on deck, and learnt the game of the East. The night was soft, and the genial stout woman, her obsequious husband and his cultured brother were kindly eager that the professor should understand.

The game fascinated him. The smoothness of the cool pieces pleased his fingers; the brightness of the reds and greens upon the creamy background pleased his eye; the words and phrases pleased his ear. This was the kind of game he had desired, this which was played with Dragons and Winds and Seasons and Bamboos. It was a peaceful, absorbing game, and he could catch the moon from the bottom of the sea. . . .

Oliver Jones might have played Mah Jong in the western world, but he had never found a place at any table.

The ship went on to the East, peering its way down the narrow path of water with gigantic white eyes.

BECAUSE he was a dreamer, Oliver Jones, chameleonlike, took on the color of his environment. He had been gray in the old life, but the East enriched him with a thousand colors, with the fierce blue of its skies and with the primary tones of brown men and yellow men and black men in their scarlet and white and green and brown. His eyes, long wearied by the sordid ugliness of the second-floor landing, saw glamour even in the dirt of the East. He became a *sahib*, a *tuan*, he who had been only—despite all the sorcery of brother Trevor—a schoolmaster who was a failure and a tourist who didn't matter. Men bowed before him, men were his slaves. That their skins were tinted could not change the fact.

Oliver Jones had come, as all voyagers must at some time, to Singapore, where the roads of the oceans meet.

He stood beside the Raffles statue, but although he was alone he was not lonely. Before him the harbor was spread out, encrusted with the jewels of the sea—the

"Go, children," said Li-Yen-See, "into the garden of love!" They bowed before him, and went dutifully away down the crooked path.

lights of countless ships swinging there and taking their ease after the weariness of great waters. Riding lights gleamed among stars as big as oranges, flares burst in explosions of gold where the jostling sampans crowded about the rusty tramps to fill their holds with wealth. Belts of bright stars moved where the ships stole in from their voyaging. The sky above was deep, thick. The stars seemed to burn long pillars of gold through it. The air was silken.

About him surged the throngs of the East. Firefly hordes of rickshaws twinkled by, their wheels purring and the runners' feet pattering rhythmically. Arabs passed with clicking sandals. Malays stepped noiselessly as shadows. Small brown children sprawled and tussled. There were lights moving and throbbing everywhere—the stars in sky and sea, the ships' lights and the rickshaws', the goggling eyes of the automobiles, the round white face of the clock. They danced before him, all those lights, the air trembled with the buzz of human voices, and people passed and passed, queer dear figures of the night and the new world he had found.

But even as he gloated upon every sight and sound and smell—yes, upon every smell—Oliver Jones was sad.

Singapore stood upon the corner of the world, and once that corner had been turned the way led home. He smiled at the word, gravely and thoughtfully. Home! It was a mockery. Home to Mrs. Alsop's second-floor landing, to the shuffling children in the gray classroom, to the world which trampled over him and went its way. Brother Trevor, who had raised him up, had ordained that he should return to those things. His fingers fumbled. That was unjust. Brother Trevor had meant well—he simply hadn't understood. He'd been too busy to understand, like all the rest of the western world. How could the mighty Trevor, who had played such a big part in its affairs, realize the position of Oliver?

So thought Oliver Jones, the new Columbus, the new Ulysses, and so thinking envied Raffles, who had made Singapore and could dream forever over his work from his pedestal.

The ships came in and went out, and Oliver Jones's ship would go round the corner, pointing on to other ports, but also, and inevitably, pointing on to home.

He let the night possess him, killing thought with its opium. He hailed a rickshaw, and sitting back in languid state, with a man as his beast of burden, drove away from the front where the ships were.

He went into Arab Street where the merchants sat with their gold-topped fezzes and their sharp-hooked noses—spiders in nests of richest silks. The air reeked with Oriental smells, and with the breath of incense fanned from braziers by earnest brown boys. And Oliver dallied there for an hour, bargaining over a pair of slippers which were not worth a dollar. The merchants were grave and polite and very attentive to him. They observed his goings and his comings, they hung upon his smile and were grieved by his frown. Abdul was his servant, his slave. A little naked round-bellied babe bowed before him with solemn dignity for the largess of a cent.

He went into Malay Street, where the café doors invited him in, and sloe-eyed girls called to him from shuttered windows, and the white old houses leaned above him, lest he should have secret business in that street which he did not wish the stars to see. But Oliver Jones had no business there, save that of mingling with the trooping crowds and hearing the tongues of half the world spoken about him, blended with the tinkle of barbaric instruments and the notes of plaintive songs. Greatly daring he ventured into a cave-like café where the gods of Java postured upon the walls. There he drank a bottle of beer, while a boy waited upon him with slavish humility, and a Japanese lady, sleek hair piled high and big black eyes appealing, sought to charm his heart with song.

But he rose and went away, like a man who is drugged, and passed up and down and round about, devouring this new world.

For Oliver Jones was that rarity, the white man in sympathy with the East. It was not that he was very wise, but simply that he had found the color and the beauty it had never been granted to him to know before. He realized the East because the West had known him not, nor he the West. His hands, empty since the days in which they had held a rattle, went out greedily and closed upon the shimmering witch who bowed before him with the grace of all the years, hailing him *sahib* and *tuan*.

"IF I could but dare!" sighed Oliver Jones.

"But why the 'if,' sir?" asked Mr. Li-Yen-See. "*If* the sea were dry we should dwell upon mountain-tops!"

They sat at a marble-topped table on the marble veranda of the Chinese Garden Club. Before them orchids hung in cascades of jewels, through which they saw smooth green lawns bisected by curving paths of white coral. Great globes of glass caught the sun's gold and transmuted it into diamonds. Beyond the coral wall at the foot of the garden the sea gleamed, and the ships came and went, going round the corner of the world after brief rest. The sky above was azure, and palms waved against it. It was the hot hour of mid-afternoon, and the senses were stroked into indolence by the blazing glory.

Before Asia took her back again, the stout woman had introduced the professor to Li-Yen-See. The Chinese gentleman was round and placid, and the color of weak tea. His almond eyes were thoughtful. The smoothness of his speech and manners and appearance suggested a brown stone which had been polished for centuries in the waters of the river of time. He was rich with the wealth of tin mines and rubber and ships. His homes were palaces, and his servants unnumbered. He had some learning, and vast wisdom. Also he had a daughter dear to him.

Li-Yen-See's shrewd eyes had looked into the soul of Oliver Jones with a care which none had deigned to give before. He read that Oliver was a wise man who could become of the East without debasement. He read that Oliver had none of the weaknesses of the other white men he could meet on terms of full equality; that he did not drink, nor gamble, nor love many women, nor greedily desire wealth. He read that Oliver was not as are other white men, and that was the reason of his failure in the West. For these things his heart went out to Oliver Jones.

Through their many meetings Oliver Jones had seen Li-Yen-See as a symbol of the East. His quick kindness, his polite esteem, his acceptance of Oliver Jones as a man of worth, his quiet pleasure in the good things of life, his magnificence—all these things made him a man of wonder.

Oliver had never met any one before who cared what he thought, and would listen to his words with real attention. He had never met a man before who could understand so well the dreams which were his, who encouraged him to talk of his dreams as if they mattered, and gave them support in rounded phrases. He sought the company of none beside in Singapore, and talked only with Li-Yen-See and the East.

In another day the steamer would carry him around the corner of the world, and there he sat in the Garden Club amid marble coolth and looking out into the blazing afternoon, the while Li-Yen-See invited him, with grave eagerness, to let the steamer go, and stay with him so long as he willed.

"YOU will love my home upon the Isle of Susu," said Li-Yen-See. "It is a fine home, sir, in which you will find comfort, peace and ease. It stands beside a blue bay, amid much beauty. It is gracious and quiet. There are many boys waiting to do your bidding, and you, sir, may walk by little crooked bridges past toy pagodas and among dwarf trees to the sea's edge. If you wish to meditate none shall come in upon you, but if you would be sociable you shall honor me, and you shall honor my daughter who talks English as I do, and who is as the moon in the first quarter!"

Thus spoke Li-Yen-See in the sleepy hour, and Oliver Jones heard him, and marveled that at long last it seemed there was a place which had been incomplete, awaiting his coming. He could not doubt the honesty of the invitation, for it had been given with a decision which stamped it as the child of deliberate thought. But, although his heart cried out for joy, Oliver Jones was afraid.

"If only I dared!" he said again, knowing that he had only enough money left to take him back to the schoolroom, and that he should not linger by the way.

"There is nothing to dare, sir," came the smooth reply. "I am not a fool, sir, but you are of the few who have nothing to fear from the East, though the West bore you. On Susu you will find what you have sought. You have come home. But if this be not the truth, then you can go on again, none the poorer, and in either case I am in your obligation. You yourself have told me that you have never dared anything. Dare now, sir, and sail with me into happiness!"

At this pleading the face of Oliver Jones awoke in a rare brave smile which revealed his simple, honest, shrinking soul, tempted out of the corner where he had hidden it from the eyes of all save Li-Yen-See. His hands grasped the calm yellow hands upon the marble.

"You are right," he said; "this is my chance! Trevor did not plan that I should go home again and break my heart. He sent me out to find the world. I have found it!"

Whereat Li-Yen-See smiled like a moon at the full, and ordered champagne, being well satisfied. It was his daughter's will that she should marry a European, and his heart had been saddened until the coming of Oliver Jones; for the only other white men who would have married her were adventurers and rogues.

They drank the wine together from fine glass, and Oliver Jones saw dreams of delight in each golden bubble.

THE twain stood upon Johnston's Jetty. The sampan had already taken the three bags—no longer new—out to the junk, and they were about to follow. But as they paused in the midst of the tide of boys and money-changers and Sikh police and men in from the sea, a fat man in immaculate whites pounced out at Oliver. He was a fellow passenger, whose curiosity had been aroused.

"Hullo!" he said. "I thought you were coming on with us to Yokohama."

"No," said Oliver Jones, "I am going away—I am going away in a junk!"

The large man gaped at him and the Chinese, and wondered what had happened to the odd little man that he should speak to him from a long way off, with dignity, and meet his eyes and be at ease. They had sometimes laughed in the smoking-room over the little rabbit of a fellow, and wondered what *he* got out of travel.

"In a junk?" he gasped, but a friend hailed him: "Come on, or we'll be late!"

He was of the West. He did not wish to be late. He blurted out a word of farewell and went, forgetting Oliver Jones. In the last breath of his stay with it the West had been curious about Oliver, but it could not wait. It hurried off and forgot him, and he passed away from it in a junk, bearing no malice but comprehending that he was not its affair.

The junk had an eye in the prow that it might see whither it went; it had matting sails, and a humped stern. It was old and smelled. Li-Yen-See could have used a power boat had he wished, but, being wise and a poet, he had selected the junk of his fathers, and had no fear of the experiment.

The coolies cried, the primitive anchor came up dripping, the matting sails flapped, a statue of bronze leaned upon the great sweep which served as a tiller, and crookedly, in the fashion of a crab, the junk walked leisurely away from Singapore. It went out past the steamers which would go around the corners of the world, past the ships rusting at rest, past the whale-like islands floating on blue glass, and so, blundering, heavy and slow, passed out onto the light green China Sea.

Li-Yen-See's experiment prospered. Oliver Jones sprawled upon the matting amidships and puffed at his pipe, regardless of the smells, uncaring for the slowness of their progress. He had discovered the sea down there, close to it. He was enthralled. He found joy in every odd thing, from the nasal song of the crew to the messes of rice and young coconut shoots they ate.

The sun climbed heaven and drowned in the sea. Great steamers stalked past the lumbering junk and hurried on to the horizon. But Oliver Jones had no regret. He had no wish to cross the sea, to go around the corner. He wanted to dream on in the creaking junk, and talk long and learnedly with Li-Yen-See, who esteemed his utterances as those of a man much versed in wisdom.

The miles lengthened behind them. Oliver Jones forgot the western world and the emptiness of the years; and the fear of the future went from him. The sun colored his white skin, and stole into all the corners of the house of his mind.

On the evening of the fourth day the junk came into Susu, that high little isle of green and blue which Li-Yen-See had chosen out of all the East for the years of his leisure. It was an isle of jade set in the mirror of the sea. They came into Susu, into a half-moon of still water where a white beach was kissed by ripples, and beyond a garden went, even as Li-Yen-See had said, by little paths and crooked bridges up to a gracious

house of white stone. Upon the roof the setting sun flung rosy benedictions. On either hand the island swelled into the smooth rich curves which gave it its Malayan name, for the curves were as the breasts of Sheba. The sunset quiet was on the world, and the night was coming in, violet-clad.

The return of Li-Yen-See, lord of the world of Susu, was greeted fittingly as the return of a king. The grave Chinese of Singapore became an all-powerful monarch to whom slaves hurried that his commands might be obeyed. And Oliver Jones, who had passed unnoticed once, was magnified to mighty stature because he had come in the shadow of the Father. Oliver Jones, that humbled, starved, forgotten unit, was a great man.

They walked up the crooked paths and over the crooked bridges among the crooked trees, and the night kissed them.

"I have seen the world of the West and the world of the East, but this is as fair a place as there is upon the earth," said Li-Yen-See with pride.

He took his friend's arm to guide his feet, and said no more; nor did he expect praise from him, for he knew that Oliver Jones had found that for which he had sought. And is it not written that when the heart speaks the tongue is silent?

Behind them like dutiful shadows the coolies carried their luggage, and were silent and kept a respectful distance, lest the lords of the earth should be troubled.

Thus Oliver Jones, the wanderer, entered into his new world, and that which remains of his Odyssey should be written down the page in fantastic crooked characters, for he had passed from the West into the East.

A TIMID, serious Chinese maid had shaved Oliver Jones, he had bathed in a shallow pool let into the floor of his white stone bathroom, he had donned fine linen. All this had been done in leisurely fashion, for Li-Yen-See had pointed out that there was no hurry.

But at last he was ready, and passed down the teak staircase and into the marble lounge where his host awaited him. The hall was hung about with fiery-snouted dragons, fish with bulging eyes and wide-winged birds worked in silver and gold upon scarlet. There were blue-broidered rugs upon the marble floor. Shaded electric lights and the comfort of the lounges and long chairs suggested the West, but there were only three walls to the apartment, and where the fourth should have been was starry purple sky.

Li-Yen-See rose to greet him, and bade him be seated by his side.

"All is as you would wish?" he asked, quietly confident.

"Yes!" said Oliver Jones, and "Yes!" again, but his tone was so eloquent and his eyes were so eloquent that the halting syllables of his tongue were of no import. He was drunk with content. His mind was cloyed with it. He who had hungered and been empty was replete.

"Good!" said Li-Yen-See. "All happens as I thought. A mistake of birth made you of the West. You will wish to stay always. We should burn joss-sticks before the goddess of Chance who gave us our meeting. If it is your wish after you have lived this life for a time you shall be as one of my sons!"

He clapped his smooth yellow hands, and a barefooted boy came quickly to hear his wish. He spoke to him briefly in Malay, and the boy bowed and fled.

"My sons are not at Susu just now," he went on. "They are away watching my affairs here and there through the Straits, and one is at Oxford. But you shall meet my daughter, and see that she is as the moon in the first quarter."

And Oliver Jones knew that this would be true, and waited complacently.

Li-Yen-See gave him a cigarette and lit it, and he puffed the blue smoke and watched it slide away upon the lazy air. Presently, through it he saw a girl approaching who had stepped from a fan of old China. She was elusive and fragile, calm and timid, fine and small. She wore a Mandarin suit of rich jade silk, the coat hanging loosely from her tiny shoulders, and the trousers finishing above the ankles to show a gleam of silk stockings and light gold-worked slippers. Her hands were beautiful, and her face oval and smooth and regular and full of peace. Her eyes were cast down, and the light struck bright paths upon the smoothness of her hair.

Oliver Jones, seeing her through the haze of smoke, and drunk with dreams, said simply: "As the moon in the first quarter!"

They were words to fit this girl; they were the only words.

At which Li-Yen-See smiled, and he was as the moon at the full.

"This is my daughter, Ei-Yan," he said, and to her: "This is he of whom I have spoken."

Oliver Jones stood up, and did not feel embarrassed when Ei-Yan took his hand and set it to her brow, nor did he blush, as was his habit, when she looked at him with her deep smoky eyes, studying him feature by feature, and said, "It is well!" as if a bird spoke suddenly.

She sat down before them on the floor with her heels beneath her, humble and unreadable. But Oliver Jones was not of the West. He did not want expression upon those features; he wanted them in calm repose; he knew how easily the face may lie.

"My daughter has been taught by English ladies; by the nuns, and by a governess when we were traveling," said Li-Yen-See. "She knows English manners when they are needed, but she remains as the moon in the first quarter. She speaks English even as I do, yet she will read to you from the books of Confucius with a free tongue. She has all the perfections, my daughter, Ei-Yan!"

"Yes!" said Oliver Jones from out his rosy dreams.

"As I have promised you, she shall talk to you when you wish and read to you when you wish, but if it is not your desire, she shall go from your presence, and you will not be troubled. It is my hope that she will find favor with you."

"Yes!" said Oliver Jones.

"And now let us eat, the three together—come!" said Li-Yen-See, and rose.

Behind them as they sat at the low tables many boys waited upon them, and the food was rare and fine, and Li-Yen-See made little jokes, and fugitive smiles went across the face of Ei-Yan, and Oliver Jones, that learned man, that mighty man, laughed like a little child.

In the days that followed Ei-Yan read to him from the books of Confucius, and also taught him wiser and older lore which was not from any book but was of her heart. Such knowledge as this had Brother Trevor sent him seeking.

At first he could not understand, for this richest of wisdoms had been for other men, but sealed to him. Yet as the days wove round him and set him firmly in the world he had discovered and which had discovered him, he looked upon Ei-Yan and found her sweet and fair beyond saying. Therefore he went to her father, and asked for her as his by right, conferring the blessing of the esteemed Oliver Jones upon the ancient family.

Li-Yen-See smiled upon him, and confessed that the desire of his friend was his desire, and the desire of his daughter.

THE Government officer who had been tempted to Susu by a big fee had married Ei-Yan and Oliver Jones in legal fashion, and he went away in the expensively chartered launch pleasantly full of whisky but most depressed to think of the depravity of a white man marrying a Chinese. He told the story at the Cricket Club, and the group about the bar swore over it, and put Oliver Jones outside their world, which was a futile ban since he had never been in it.

The Chinese ceremony had been carried out with proper pomp and dignity. The last feast was over, the flutes cried no more, the strings were silent. The guests had gone to their homes, or to their rooms.

And now Li-Yen-See stood upon the veranda with Ei-Yan and Oliver Jones beside him in their Chinese dress and the moonlight streaming upon them.

"Go, children," said Li-Yen-See, "into the garden of love!"

They bowed before him, and went dutifully away down the crooked path. Oliver Jones, who had been so sad and gray, walked through the moonlight in a suit of creamy Chinese silk with slippers on his feet, and soft in the curve of his arm the girl who was as the moon in the first quarter.

"I love you," said Ei-Yan, who had been trained by nuns.

She put her face up to him

And Oliver Jones, who had been so small of stature in the western world, had to stoop to kiss her; Oliver Jones, who had been so poor and weak in the western world, seemed rich and mighty in the moonshine of the East. Together they passed down the crooked path with the sea lisping beside them to the place which had been prepared for Oliver Jones and his bride, to the bungalow amid the flame trees.

A New Novelist's First Offering

One-Way Street

Trying to Be Fair to the Woman He Thought He Loved, Austin Finds Himself More and More Embarrassed

By Beale Davis

Illustrations by W. G. Ratterman

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

AS HE sat in the Café Inglés waiting for his order of rice à la Valencia—that dish of strange delights, never twice the same—Robert Austin felt that somehow this was his farewell to Spain. In the six months since his transference from the London Embassy to Madrid, this country of high color and sharp contrasts had got tighter hold of him than he had realized until now.

The train for San Sebastian—and Sylvia—was due in an hour and a half. . . . It was very reluctantly that the Ambassador had approved his leave. He had never let Bob suspect until he had asked for it, how much he knew of his life in London or of his infatuation for Lady Sylvia Hutton.

Fresh from his university, less than four years ago, he had been sent to the London Embassy. There his eagerness and cleanness, and real distinction of appearance, got him immediate notice.

Lady Sylvia Hutton noted it all the way across the Carleton dining-room the first night she saw him and immediately took adroit steps to add him to her entourage.

This she succeeded in doing very quickly. His youth and fineness were tributes her beauty had not had for many a year and his naïveté made him an easy victim.

His more conservative friends, Elizabeth Stuart especially, and his associates at the Embassy, looked on unhappily but helplessly. In the throes of his first real love affair Bob would not listen to their warnings about the decadence of Lady Sylvia's crowd, and the real peril to his diplomatic career that association with them threatened.

At first he balked at making bridge a business instead of a pastime, and at the game of hoodwinking husbands that flourished among them, but he was soon so drugged with his passion for Sylvia that he came to accept them as a matter of course.

But he never ceased to beg that she divorce Sir Edward. He could not tolerate the thought that she was another man's wife. Whenever he became particularly difficult on this subject Sylvia would hold out a crumb of hope, and he would be satisfied for a while.

Then came the transfer to Madrid. It was a blow to both of them.

"If ever I wire you to meet me, you'll know that I can stand it no longer," Sylvia told him at parting, and so when her telegram came he was sure that his dream was near fulfilment. At San Sebastian, however, he learned that it was merely to join a yachting party en route to Monte Carlo, that she had wired him.

Infuriated at having been brought away from his work at an inauspicious time on such a pretext, Bob planned to go back to Madrid from Gibraltar, but when the yacht

reached Gibraltar he was again completely under Sylvia's spell. Several weeks later, in Monte Carlo, when a telegram announced his transfer to Paraguay, he resigned, on Sylvia's advice. London and a berth in the City sounded attractive and easy when she spoke of them—and Paraguay meant isolation.

Two of Austin's friends expressed their regret at his decision. One was Elizabeth Stuart, with whom he had lost touch in London. She was playing in a tennis tournament at Cannes and when they met, she was as cordial as ever, in spite of his shabby treatment.

The other was Kathleen Lawrence. Mrs. Lawrence was one of the most notorious women in Europe. Bob met her in the gaming rooms one night, and a pleasant friendship had developed from this casual meeting—the sort of relationship that Bob had supposed was impossible in that atmosphere and with a woman of Kathleen's class. It was especially timely, for Sylvia was playing about with Ali Bey, a Turkish diplomat, and Bob was forced to amuse himself much of the time. He found in Kathleen none of the marks of the demi-mondaine. She was exquisite, with the simplicity of a child.

"Somehow," she told him, "I got into a street marked 'One Way Only,' and now there is no escaping it."

Sylvia really loved Bob as much as it was in her to love. Never again, she realized, would her beauty receive the tribute that Bob had paid it—the first love of clean youth. But even for love she could not relinquish the possibility of adding another celebrity to her train. So when she learned that Ali Bey was going to London she hurried back to clinch him as her lion for the next season. To Bob she gave a glib explanation about Sir Edward, her husband. He always became "difficult" or "tiresome" when Lady Sylvia's plans demanded it. She overplayed a bit, however, and for the first time Bob's suspicions were aroused.

Some days after Lady Sylvia's departure Bob and Kathleen, suddenly sated with Monte Carlo, planned an impromptu excursion to Sospel, a quaint little town on a byway back in the hills.

That evening they were restless and excited like two school-children before holiday time.

WHEN Bobby awoke next morning he found himself looking forward to the day before him with an eagerness that he had not experienced for a very long time.

When she joined him, Kathleen's mood matched his own.

As soon as their hurried luncheon was finished, they started. Bobby drove, with Kathleen beside him, and their two small bags bouncing about on the seat behind them.

"Real explorers, we are," she said, looking back at them, "traveling light." Both laughed. They were in a mood to laugh at anything.

"We're off!" Bobby exclaimed as he turned the car toward Mentone. "Mentone, and then straight up into the mountains."

On the road Kathleen leaned over toward him. "Do you notice anything unusual about my face?" she demanded.

"Nothing beyond the fact that you seem to be in an unusually happy mood."

"No, you blind bat, look again! I haven't on one speck of make-up. Christine almost gave notice when I refused the war-paint this morning, and I'll admit that my face felt terribly naked when I appeared undisguised before the world. And you didn't even notice it."

He looked again. "And I still don't see any difference."

"Flatterer! You'll soon have me believing myself ten years younger than my real mature age."

"That would put you back in pigtails and the schoolroom, wouldn't it?"

"That's exactly how I feel. Do you remember how glorious the beginning of the holidays used to be? Nothing like that first day of freedom." The wind had whipped loose a lot of her uncovered fair hair and now blew it about her face. Eyes shining, lips parted, she looked the schoolgirl on a holiday. Evidently her mental, as well as her physical, make-up had been left behind in Monte Carlo.

Outside Mentone they turned to the left and headed up into the mountains.

"Now our adventures really begin," Bobby said as the road became steeper and less well cared for. "None of your made-to-order Riviera about that"—motioning to the hills that piled up before them.

"Look, Bobby! I'm sure that must be Castillon. I do hope our road passes close enough for us to stop and see it. I'd love to."

They drove on and finally came to a pathway which seemed to lead to the deserted town, now high above them.

"Want to go up?" he asked, slackening the car's speed.

"Do let's."

Together they scrambled up the rocky footpath and arrived breathless among the ruins. They stood for a moment regarding the view.

"I almost expect to see the Saracens dash out and down into the valley on a raiding expedition," Kathleen said.

As they wandered among the ruins Kathleen continued to talk of Castillon, its history, and from that to the rest of this strip of country along the Mediterranean, so full of monuments of past civilizations. Bobby was amazed at her fund of information.

"How do you happen to know so much about this part of the world?" he inquired.

"It just happens to interest me," Kathleen replied abstractedly.

"And Sospel? Do you know anything of that?"

"Nothing much—except it's in a valley and built along the bank of a little river whose name I've forgotten."

After an hour's exploration, they resumed their journey. An hour later, topping a hill, they saw Sospel in the valley below them, the houses nestling close together for protection against the frowning hills which surrounded them. Here and there one caught the glint of the tiny river which wound through the town.

"Enchanting," Kathleen murmured, looking down at the village already hazy in the shadow of the taller hills.

Just before they reached it, they stopped the car and inquired of a passing native where an inn was to be found.

THERE was an inn, the man replied; but it would not suit Monsieur and Madame, he added after an appraising glance at them and the car. "It is very small."

They assured him that a small inn was exactly what they sought. Following his directions, they drove through the narrow streets—the interest their passage occasioned proving that visitors were a rarity—and found themselves before an inn out of a story-book.

It was tiny and pink. From a wide balcony vines and geraniums trailed almost to the ground. Open green blinds disclosed glimpses of spotless white curtains inside.

Kathleen gave a gasp of delight. "It's too good to be true!" she exclaimed.

The door was thrown open and a very round, very smiling little man came out to the car. But certainly he could put them up. The rooms on the balcony, where they would breakfast in the morning, were vacant. The mist, unfortunately, made it unwise to dine outside. Dinner! Of course, they could have dinner, but inside, with just a tiny fire to make the room cheery and take the evening chill from the air. He would prepare dinner with his own hands.

Upstairs Kathleen came and stood in the open door of Bobby's room. "What a sweet little man! I love him and he loves us, and there is the most divinely hideous china dog on my mantel with a basket of magenta roses in his mouth. Everything is perfect. Come, let's explore the village. I can't wait another minute." Catching Bobby by the hand she dragged him through the door, refusing even to let him stop to get his hat.

Outside, they wandered aimlessly about. Everything delighted them. They stood for a long time on one of the old stone bridges which arched the narrow river. Almost beneath them a girl squatted on a sort of platform, scrubbing a pile of brightly colored clothes in the sluggish stream. A little farther on, two old women leaned from opposite overhanging balconies and exchanged the gossip of the day—their voices mingling pleasantly with the faint murmur of the river. Two children sat solemnly fishing, catching nothing.

They had not nearly exhausted the delights and surprises of Sospel when hunger drove them back to the inn. There they found an excellent dinner, prepared by their host with his own pudgy little hands.

"Are you glad you came, Bobby?" Kathleen asked at last.

"Very—and you?"

"I am more nearly happy than I've been for a long, long time," Kathleen replied simply. "Monte Carlo and the life there seem millions of miles away—so far that I don't feel, for the moment, that I'd ever

been there or had any part in it all. It's more like a rather disagreeable dream. I suppose tomorrow this will seem so—except this will be a very happy one."

Dinner over, they went for a stroll; but very shortly their steps began to lag, and soon they turned and walked silently through the moonlight back to the pink geranium inn.

Inside, on a table by the door, was a lighted candle with two unlighted ones standing beside it. They lighted them and tiptoed up the stairs of the quiet house. At her door they stopped. "Good night," she whispered. Then unexpectedly, impulsively, she lifted her face and kissed him. "Thanks, Bobby dear, for the happiest day I've had for a long, long time." Before he could reply, she entered her room, closing the door behind her.

In his room, Bobby blew out his candle and undressed by the moonlight which poured in through his open window. Beyond the connecting door he could hear Kathleen moving about in the next room. His brain seethed with conflicting emotions. What had her kiss meant? Nothing, he told himself quickly—ashamed of the thought. It had been as spontaneous and sexless as a child's. She had been full of the joy of living and her kiss had been simply her expression of appreciation for their happy day together. And it had been a happy day. They had played and laughed like two children, and as innocently.

He tried to visualize Sylvia in Kathleen's place. He could not, and with an unexpected lack of surprise he realized that he was unable to visualize her at all. Why? Then—subconsciously he must have felt it for some time—he knew that it made not the slightest difference to him whether he ever saw Sylvia again. The rainbow of fascination was gone. But when—why?

STILL wondering, he got into bed and lay staring up at the ceiling. Was this a passing mood, brought about by his discovery in Sylvia's letter of the day before? No. There was something more than that. Kathleen! Why could not he drive the thoughts of her away? Why did they so persistently remain?

Mental pictures of her flashed through his brain. And in all of them he found an added something which he had never found there before—something almost virginal.

The pictures of today merged into others. Kathleen sauntering among the tables in the gambling rooms, a part of the exotic scene! Then he saw her as she had looked that first night when she came into Ciro's with the Italian. He tried to rid himself of this picture of the two together—but he could not; again and again it came back.

Slowly, the Kathleen of today, the laughing companion, disappeared, and he could see nothing but the beautiful Mrs. Lawrence, notorious and desirable. Her provocative beauty distorted every thought which came to him, until only one remained. He wanted her. He could think of nothing else. God, how he wanted her!

For a time he lay still; then, slipping out of bed, he went and leaned against one of the windows opening out onto the little balcony which ran along the house.

He stood there for several minutes before he saw Kathleen leaning over the balcony, hands clasped, bathed in moonlight. Breathing hard, he crossed to her.

She turned round slowly, her eyes filled with dreams, and when she spoke it was in the vague tone of a child suddenly awakened. "What is it, Bobby? What do you want?"

He leaned close to her, his hands on her shoulders. His arms pressed hard against hers. "You darling!" he whispered. "I love you, Kathleen—I love you," his lips repeated the meaningless formula.

Drawing her close, he pressed his lips hard on her unresponsive ones, covered her face with hungry kisses—kisses which gave the lie to his spoken words.

"I had to come to you, my sweetheart. I couldn't stay away." Again his lips pressed hers. "Oh, I love you so!" The same old formula!

Very quietly she disengaged one arm, and gently pushed him away.

"Why did you do it? Oh, Bobby! Why did you ruin it all?"

There was something so pitifully hurt in her tone that for a moment it arrested him. "Nothing is ruined, sweetheart. It's glorious. I love you, and you love me—don't you? Say you do."

She stood quite still for a moment. Bob, clogged with emotion, could not read her eyes, but he felt the aloofness of her spirit; and finally his arms loosed their hold.

"Of course it couldn't be—but I did want it so. I was a fool," she said wearily, "a fool ever to hope for it."

"What is it, sweet?" he whispered anxiously. "Tell me."

"I hoped that you'd forget that I am Kathleen Lawrence—and for a while I thought you had. But no—it's always the same thing. No man ever does."

For a moment neither spoke. "Do you realize, Bobby, that there is one thing that all the Kathleen Lawrences want—oh, so terribly—and can never have? There is. . . . It's friendship. The women whose morals are no better than ours fear us. The others despise us. And the men—in search of friendship, they never come to us. But we keep on—always hoping to find it around the next corner. Seen everywhere, bejeweled, dancing, dining, we're the loneliest people in the world." There was no trace of self-pity in her voice. There was nothing in it except an infinite weariness.

"Don't—please, Kathleen!" Bobby broke in, his voice choked and pleading. "Don't say any more—I feel such an utter dog already. Is there anything that I can do to make you forget all of this? Try to, please. If you can forgive me, I'll prove to you that friendship is possible—that is, if you want mine now."

She reached out and took his hand. "Darling Bobby! You're just as nice, deep down inside, as I was sure you were the first time I met you. We'll both forget this. Now, good night, dear."

"Good night, Kathleen." He leaned over and kissed her lightly on the forehead, then went to his own room, closing the door behind him.

It was day before Bobby went to sleep. The night's happenings he faced squarely, and did not spare himself. He saw what he had done for what it was. Love! What a sacrilege! Lust, passion, stark animal desire, what you please, but never love.

In the face of the wordless pact which he had made with Kathleen, that had come about. He felt unclean—dirty.

Then, out of his self-disgust and scorn was born the realization that his love for Sylvia was not love at all.

In the beginning—that night in the moonlight—his body had answered the call of hers. Physical desire had lured him, and like the nine hundred and ninety-nine he believed he had discovered love. Now he knew he had been cheated, and with the knowledge the last fading tints of the rainbow of his fascination for Sylvia Hutton melted into the nothingness from which they had come.

WHEN they met the next morning, Kathleen suggested that they return to Monte Carlo. Bobby had expected this and he made no demur, but he was surprised when he found that she was also, literally, going to forget the happenings of the night before. He had anticipated something in her manner, if not in actual words, to remind him of what, in the matter-of-fact light of day, appeared even less excusable than it had in his first revulsion of feeling the night before. And so it was that, in the evening, they were again at a little corner table at Ciro's, where, almost nightly since Sylvia's departure, they had dined—both of them feeling that very much more than forty-eight hours had elapsed since they were last there.

It did not occur to Bobby that any one could be enough interested in his movements to note his absence of the night before, and he would have been greatly surprised had he seen the accuracy of detail concerning it, with which Vera filled a letter to Sylvia.

"I'm delighted," she wrote, "that we are leaving next week. Otherwise I fear we would return four instead of five. Mrs. Lawrence has completely captivated Bobby, for the moment anyway. He's never away from her, morning, noon or night—and that is to be taken literally and in its entirety, my dear.

"It was by the merest chance that I learned of the latest development. Adèle Audley rushed up to me last night, gibbering with excitement. It seems that she was on her way here from Mentone when she met the two of them, alone in a motor. A glimpse of two bags on the back seat, and she was off like a ferret on the trail of the scandal.

"To make a long story short, they went to Sospel, a filthy little village, where they put up at the local pub.

"So there you have it, dear. And I'm sure that you'll agree it is high time for Bobby to leave. Pity Adèle was the person

to find it out. She will take such pleasure in telling the story all over London. My unsolicited advice to you is to write to him at once and see to it that he comes back on the yacht."

After reading this, Sylvia thought for a long time before deciding just what sort of letter she would write to Bobby, and numerous sheets of paper found their way to the waste basket before she got one at all to her liking.

"Although I've had no letter from you for a good many days," her fourth attempt began, "you see I am not holding it against you. Monte Carlo is such a difficult place for any one to get anything done that I feel flattered that you have written as often as you have.

"My first news is that Edward has at last come to his senses and everything is serene again. But you have no idea how very difficult it has been. Except for the fact that Vera returns so soon now, I'd suggest that you leave the Riviera and come to London. But I suppose—out of politeness—it would be better for you to wait for her.

"I'm quite anxious for you to be in London soon, however—and for a reason quite apart from my not unnatural desire to see you. Even yet I can hardly realize that I am going to have you back here for good. The reason is, Mr. Bobby Austin, that I have spent the greatest amount of time and gone to no end of trouble to arrange something in the City for your very helpless and lazy self. Nothing more can be done until you arrive—so I am quite pleased that it is to be so soon."

SYLVIA reread the letter as far as it had gone, while she decided whether or not she should mention Mrs. Lawrence. Beyond a slight annoyance she attached no importance to Vera's news. It never occurred to her to consider Kathleen seriously. But she preferred that he should not find himself too well amused. Possibly it would be wiser, after all, to put in a word. After weighing the advantages of the various ways she could bring in her name, she invented:

"And by the way, have you been seeing anything of Mrs. Lawrence, as I suggested? I'd quite forgotten her until last night when I happened to sit next an old beau of hers at dinner. He seemed quite interested to hear about her Italian, and was really surprised when I told him that he had taken his departure shortly after my arrival, and that up to the time I left, she had not succeeded in finding a successor.

"His observation on the subject of ladies of her sort seemed to me very apt: 'Theirs is the only profession where one is paid for youthful inexperience.' Quite true and rather tragic."

Again Sylvia sat thinking, pen poised. In all probability this would be the last letter Bobby would receive from her before his arrival in London.

"Ali Bey has turned up, and I am not at all sure that I like him so well in these surroundings. (That astute young man had shown a marked disinclination to fall in with her plans when they clashed with his own, and was altogether proving himself difficult.) People one meets abroad so often turn out to be impossible with a London background. And, of course, in England—even with all of the *kudos* he got out of the recent negotiations—he is, after all, an Egyptian.

"Don't bother to write to me again, but wire me when to expect you, and I will see that your flat is ready. Searle almost wept with joy when I told him that you were coming back and wanted him again, and he will be installed in the flat when you arrive. So your material comfort seems assured. Best love, Bobby dear. I'm delighted at the thought of seeing you so soon. Bless you. S."

The letter reached Monte Carlo a few days before the yacht was to return to England. Sipping his morning coffee, Bobby read it. The allusion to Kathleen brought a frowning, "Damn swine—wonder who he is?" to his lips. He finished the letter. It had been decent of Sylvia to take so much trouble arranging things at his flat for him. In the past, had she done this, he would have been pleased out of all proportion to the service rendered. Now he felt a very definite and uncomfortable sense of obligation.

One thing was very clear. He had no desire to return to England. But now that he was definitely out of the diplomatic service, London it must be. Particularly as Sylvia had told him that Sir Edward

Bobby took a step toward her, opened his mouth to speak—and closed it again. Should he leave her, or remain and try to patch up some understanding?

Dorne wanted him in his bank in the City.

But how was he going to tell Sylvia that the thing he had laughed aside so often had occurred—that he had ceased to care for her? That she was entirely unaware of any change in his affections, her letter showed plainly. A letter? No—he could never make her understand by writing.

The longer he thought of it, the more he became convinced that there was only one thing to do. It would be hard—desperately hard—to confess to her, around whom his world had revolved for so long, that for him it was all finished. But because of all that she had meant to him then, he would not now belittle it with pretense. From every point of view there seemed to be but one thing to do—and that was to be honest with her and with himself.

Later in the morning, when he joined Kathleen, he was still reviewing the situation in which he found himself. "Tell me, Kathleen, if a man and a woman have cared very much for each other and the man suddenly discovers that he doesn't care any longer, what do you think that he should do?"

"That depends on the man, the woman and circumstances. As you put it, the situation is much too indefinite to make an answer possible."

"Well, suppose they have both cared for each other for a long time, and the woman suspects nothing of any change in the man. But he—"

Kathleen interrupted him. "You're dealing in generalities, and asking me to decide a question of personalities. It all depends on the woman."

"Then, hang it all, I'll give you the facts. It's Sylvia. I was in love with her for three years—mad about her. Then, suddenly, I realized that I wasn't any more. Just when I ceased to care, I don't know. I never absolutely realized it until Sospel." His face flushed as he said this. "Now I've got to go back to England and see her."

"WHY not wait to decide until you do? You may find out that you've only imagined that it's all over, and when you see her again—"

"No. I know that it is over. It isn't that I'm not fond of Sylvia. I am—very. She's a wonderful companion. There's nobody I want more to have as a friend. But the rest is finished."

Kathleen considered a moment. "It's not an easy question to answer. There are so many things to be considered. So much depends on—on such a lot of things. Was your affair very—serious?"

Bobby looked straight at her. "Very."

"Then don't tell her," Kathleen declared with conviction. "Do anything else. Have a row and make it appear that she began it herself. Pretend. Do anything, no matter what—but don't tell her that your love for her is past. Don't put it into words."

"But Sylvia would want to be told. It's much less humiliating for me to tell her than for her to discover it from some one else."

"I never suggested that. Make her get tired of you and throw you over. Be jealous—exacting. But be sure that she thinks *she* does the chucking, and not you."

"Do you realize what it means if I do as you advise—what this game of pretending would have to be?"

"Perfectly—and I still advise it."

"I couldn't, Kathleen. After our three years—I couldn't do it. For three years she was everything to me. I owe it to her to be square and honest now, no matter how it hurts."

"Listen, Bobby! I agree that you are absolutely right in theory. It is the honest way—and the hardest. It takes real courage to do what you are planning. But in this case, don't—I beg you."

She waved aside his attempted interruption. "With some women, I'd say you were right. But with Lady Sylvia—never. All her life she has been a spoiled beauty, taking what she wanted, and throwing it aside when she pleased. Now she is forty, at least, and she knows that her reign is ending. Every morning when she looks in her mirror she tells herself that it is because she sat up too late, or took too much exercise or not enough—anything but the truth. She won't admit that there is only a flicker of youth left. If you do what you are contemplating, you will tear away the one thing with which she continues still to deceive herself—her belief in her ability to hold men. And she will hate you, Bobby; only God, or another woman, knows how she will hate you."

He was silent for a moment, impressed

by Kathleen's evident certainty. "Still, it looks a rotten thing to do."

"Yes and no. I'm a woman and see it from a woman's angle. The only woman for whom the first love, that we hear so much about, is all-important, is the woman for whom the first love is the only one. With the others, it's the last one that's dearest. All the old similes, the last drop of water in the desert, the one spar after the shipwreck, are weak when you compare them to the last love which comes into a woman's life. A woman clings to it with every atom of strength that is in her, for when it's gone, everything else goes with it. No, no, Bobby. You mustn't. After all, love and hate aren't even so far apart as genius and madness. And no man could possibly imagine the sort of hate you'd inspire."

"I'm more than half a mind just to stay away; not to go back to London and the whole mixed-up affair."

"But aren't you going into the City? I thought that was your plan when you gave up diplomacy."

"So it was. But can't you see, that complicates things still more. It's more or less through Sylvia's influence that Sir Edward Dorne is going to make a place for me."

"Well?"

"Oh, I don't know. If I go back, and pretend that things are as they always have been it might look as if I did it with a purpose."

"Now you're being absurd. You know why you are doing it—and know that it's for no other reason than kindness to Lady Sylvia. Kindness does seem a bad word here, but that's really what it is. There's no reason to bring this other thing into it at all. You know it has nothing to do with your decision. Nobody else knows anything. Leave it at that."

"I was a damn fool to chuck diplomacy, wasn't I? If I hadn't there would be a perfectly simple solution."

"That's done. No use regretting it now. But my advice to you is not to be a damn fool twice. Go to London and get something to do. . . . I know it sounds strange, coming from me, but the sooner you get out of this aimless sort of life, and the people who go with it, the better. You don't belong in it all, Bobby. You're too good for it. Get out before it's too late." For a minute she was silent, looking straight ahead of her. "It's pretty awful when, too late, you find that you're in a road marked 'One Way Only.' "

That night he asked Vera about her plans for returning to London.

IN SPITE of the dreaded ordeal ahead of him Bobby found it good to be in England again.

He refused to let himself think of his coming meeting with Sylvia. He had decided to follow Kathleen's advice. He hated the part he was to play, but had finally become convinced that it was the only one possible. He had held out for a long time against her argument, only succumbing when she put it on the ground of kindness to Lady Sylvia.

The taxi drew up before his flat. Inside, his door was opened by Searle, who as nearly beamed as is possible for an English servant.

"How are you, Searle?" he said, giving him his coat and hat. "It seems very natural and very nice to be back again with you to look after me."

"Thank you, sir. I'm pleased to be here again."

"Any telephone message?"

"One from her Ladyship, sir. She wants you to call her up as soon as you arrive."

Bobby turned to the telephone—lifted the instrument and then put it down again. He preferred that his first conversation should not be over the telephone.

"I'm going to have a bath now, Searle. Get me out some fresh clothes, please."

"Very good, sir."

A few moments later, Bobby called from the bathroom: "Searle! Call up Mayfair 3401 and say that I have arrived, and ask when her Ladyship will be at home."

"Her Ladyship expects you for tea, sir," the servant reported, when Bobby emerged from the bathroom to finish dressing. This done, he called for a coat and hat.

"If any one wants me, I'll be at the club until five, and after that Grosvenor Street—I shall only want a dinner jacket tonight," he called back as he went out.

On the way to Grosvenor Street his distaste for this meeting grew with each succeeding step, and he felt an ever increasing

disinclination to play the part he had assigned himself.

Waiting for him in her delightful morning-room, Lady Sylvia also felt some slight misgiving. She had refused to take Vera's suspicions and gossip seriously, but she admitted to herself that she had tried Bobby's affections rather severely at Monte Carlo. And there was just the shadow of a fear that she had gone a bit too far.

She glanced at her watch. It was nearly five, and he might arrive at any minute now. She walked over to the tea table and lighted the burner beneath the hot-water kettle. Then she looked about the room. It was just as she wanted it—half lit by the blazing log fire, full of flowers, comfortable and cheery. Just the right atmosphere for intimate confidences. Before the mirror in her room, she had realized that the dull gold dress which she had chosen became her unusually well, and she felt she was looking her best. She dropped into her chair and waited.

In a very few minutes the door was thrown open and the butler announced Mr. Austin.

"Bobbykins," she cried, rising to meet him, "if I could tell you how glad I am to see you!" And she meant it. As he crossed the room she felt again that little stab of fear. What a fool she had been even to chance losing him! Just then, to be everything to him meant more to her than all else in the world.

He took her in his arms and kissed her. Then she knew. No, no! She would not believe what her intuition told her. Fear now held her but she defied it. She would fight. She could hold men—she always had—and she would hold this one who meant more to her than any other ever had. She looked up at him, smiling brightly.

"Come! You shall have your tea at once. I'm sure you're dying for it."

"Thanks, tea does sound fine. Frightfully gloomy outside." Bobby was grateful for this brief respite which the business of tea permitted. The instant he had entered the room, he knew that his love for her was utterly dead. He had felt not the slightest thrill at seeing her, only a puzzled sort of wonder that this woman had ever had the power to make his days heaven or hell as she chose.

"Is this luck, or did you remember my failing for this sort of sandwich?" he asked, as he bit into one, taking refuge behind the commonplace.

"Could I forget your liking for them when you've held forth on the subject for years?" she laughed. "Of course I remember. And look—your special cakes, too. Now dare say I don't spoil and coddle you as if you were two years old!"

Bobby smiled and held out his cup. "Then another, please."

Sylvia refilled it and gave it back to him, aromatic and steaming. "Tell me," she said, "how was the trip back? Did you enjoy it?"

"Not very much. We had the rottenest sort of weather, and so stayed inside all of the time. Of course, that meant bridge and lots of it, and I had an awful row with Lady Audley."

"I'm glad you did. It's quite time some one put her in her place. I'd never have had the courage myself. And speaking of bridge, reminds me. I want you to dine tomorrow night. You'll enjoy it. I've only asked people you like to play with. It's really your party and I knew you'd like just a few people and bridge better than anything else."

"Thanks, Sylvia dear, I'll love to come."

Bobby was feeling very uncomfortable. Sylvia, today, seemed so much the companion, so direct, that his game of pretense was going to be harder than he had anticipated. A doubt of its wisdom began to grow. Had Kathleen's judgment been right, after all? Would it not be better to do as he had first intended and, at the very beginning, place their relation flatly on a new foundation of comradeship?

"WHAT makes you so quiet, Bobby? You've hardly spoken since you came in. Are you too tired, or too occupied with tea to talk? But never mind; don't talk unless you feel like it. Here's a cigarette," she added, as she noticed him fumbling in his pocket for one. She handed him a big box and, rising, got a match and held it for him, then walked over and seated herself on a couch.

"Now you've really had all the tea I'll allow. Come sit by me and tell me all about yourself—what you and everybody have been doing."

Bobby arose reluctantly. He had dawdled over tea—dragging it out as long as

he could—to avoid the intimate conversation which he knew had to come.

He took a seat beside her on the couch, and mechanically put his arm about her. Her nearness awoke not even a suggestion of his old passion. Instead he felt a sort of sick disgust with himself and this play-acting. If now it was as hard as this, he knew he could never carry on the deception. She would sense it—he was certain of it. But if he told her she *would* understand—more than understand, she would wish it. He made himself believe this. All their past demanded that he be honest, and this pretense was degrading it.

She leaned closer to him and the closeness and softness of her body made him squirm. He could not, no matter what the consequences might be, go through with it. He must tell her!

"Haven't you anything to say to me, Bobby boy? You've hardly even said you were glad to see me." She leaned heavily against him—her perfume cloyingly sweet.

Abruptly he rose and walked over to the fire, where he threw his hardly begun cigarette on the blazing logs. Nervously he lighted another, then walked back to the couch and stood before her. He hesitated, considering his words.

"Sylvia—I have something I want to tell you. I've thought about it a lot—and you have a right to know it," he stammered miserably.

Her eyes never left his face, her fingers pulled nervously at her handkerchief. She said nothing, but continued to stare hard at him. She felt as one does in a dream when some great overwhelming mass rolls relentlessly toward one who stands before it, powerless to stop it or move from its path. She knew what was coming, and cringed under the fear of hearing the spoken words.

"Sylvia"—his voice was very low and pleaded for understanding—"I hate to—but I've got to tell you—it's finished."

Sylvia closed her eyes. A narrow line of white showed at the edges of her rouged lips. Each separate little muscle of her face twitched and pulled until every tiny wrinkle showed, sharply defined. She sat very still—eyes closed. Her finger-nails dug deep into the palms of her tightly clenched hands.

She opened her eyes and looked up at him. The only sound in the room was her sharp, broken breathing. As he stood before her, straight and tall and young, the appeal which she had always felt so strongly forced her to use a plea which she had always scorned to stoop to. He was hers and there was nothing which she could not do to hold him. If love could not—then she would appeal to his generosity, his pity.

"FINISHED!" she said aloud, a pathetic little catch in her voice. "Do you mean you don't love me? Oh, no, no, Bobby—it can't be." She reached and caught his hands. "It can't be, darling. I love you, Bobby. I love you. I can't give you up. You are everything I have in the world. You realize what my life is with Edward. And without you, I couldn't bear it, Bobby, I couldn't." She had worked herself up to such a state of self-pity that tears stood in her eyes. Her face was drawn—haggard.

He looked down at her, grave and infinitely troubled. But he had to see it through. The memory of her kisses made only one course possible. He could not resume the old relationship. He shook his head helplessly. "Oh, God! What a swine I feel! I don't know why it is, dear; I don't know what's happened to me, but—it's the end. . . . I'm sorry."

Then it came! She had humiliated herself before this man. She had begged for his love—almost groveled before him—and with a pitying "I'm sorry" he had put her out of his mind.

Blind, ungovernable rage—rage such as she had never felt—possessed her. She jumped to her feet and began to pace the open space between her seat and the fireplace. "Sorry! Sorry, are you?" she demanded in a tight, hard voice. "And for what? That you're not with your painted harlot at Monte Carlo? Go back to her—that's my advice!" She stood for a minute and looked at him, her eyes blazing. "I'm through with you. I hope to God I'll never lay my eyes on you again, Mr. Bobby Austin. You're rotten—do you realize it? Rotten! You've shown yourself for just what you are. And do you know what that is? There's a word for men who content themselves with other men's left-overs. Go back to her! She'll be waiting—never fear. Nobody else wants

her. Those who did bought and paid for her long ago."

BOBBY stood, face crimson, and listened to the tirade. Slowly the angry flush which had come to his face faded, leaving it a dead white. This old-faced, hysterical woman was a stranger to him, a Sylvia he had never known—never considered—in his decision to be honest. Desperately he searched his brain for something which would put an end to the scene.

"There's nothing between Mrs. Lawrence and me. That I assure you," was his futile attempt.

"Of course you do. Even you would hardly come with your pretended chivalrous respect for a dead love, and in the same breath admit a love affair with that woman." She was silent for a moment. "Sylvia Hutton and Kathleen Lawrence—rivals! God Almighty, how comic it is!"

She began to laugh hysterically. Dropping into a chair, she covered her face with her hands, her body shaking convulsively. Bobby took a step toward her. Then stopped. Opened his mouth to speak—and closed it again. He had no idea what to do. Should he leave her or remain and try to patch up some semblance of an understanding? Suddenly Sylvia ceased laughing. Behind the screen of her open hands, her face worked convulsively. She was fighting desperately to regain control of herself.

Through all of her outburst of fury, one part of her brain had been working, as it were, entirely outside of herself.

One fact was inescapable. Unless she were to appear in a ridiculous position—the world must not know that any change had come in their relationship, until *she* chose to throw him aside. Until then, he must appear hers before the world. Succinctly that calculating bit of her brain summed up the situation.

Vera, Mrs. Brinton—in fact, everybody at Monte Carlo—knew of his evident devotion to Kathleen Lawrence there. And that meant that all London knew. She regretted tremendously that she had practically forced a promise out of Sir Edward Dorne to place Bobby in his bank. No doubt he had chuckled with more than one person, recounting her insistence. He had come back to London because she was there. The conclusion was obvious. Nobody must know anything of what had transpired. When the time came—but that could be thought of later.

At last she felt that she had regained control of herself—had herself in hand. She drew a long breath and looked up at Bobby.

"I'm all right now." Her smile was a wonderful counterfeit of shamed apology.

She rose and came over to the fire before which he stood, careful to put the width of the fireplace between them.

"Forget all that I said, can you? I didn't mean one word of it—I don't even know what I did say. Hysterical women are entirely irresponsible for the wild things they say. Forget it, won't you?"

Relief at this sudden change eclipsed any wonder which he might have felt for it. "I'll try my best, Sylvia," he replied gravely; "it's all my fault, anyway. I feel a miserable cad."

"Hush! I won't listen to you abuse yourself. You've done the right thing—I would never have had the strength, and it's so much better as it is."

"Do you mean that?" Bobby asked eagerly.

"Of course I mean it. The end had to come sometime. Doing what you did, Bobby dear, shows me how very big and fine your love for me was."

"And you're glad I told you, and refused to pretend?" he demanded, his tone an appeal for approbation.

"Of course. And it makes the future so simple."

"What is it to be?" he asked. "I can't picture it at all here in London, except as revolving very much about you."

"Then we'll leave it at that. There's nothing to prevent us seeing as much of each other as we always have."

Bobby laughed happily, infinitely relieved at the turn things had taken. "I knew you would understand; I was always sure of it. I told Kathleen that you would want to know."

The sentence came out quite unconsciously. If anything were needed to complete the havoc he had wrought, the admission that he had discussed her with Kathleen Lawrence did it. To the credit of her years in the school of pretense, Sylvia choked back the words which came to her lips. Bobby, quite unaware of his inadvertent admission, proceeded to map out a future

which presupposed their uninterrupted companionship. Sylvia seemed to fall in with his plans unreservedly.

"By the way, how about this thing in the City? I must get that settled at once."

"Oh, that! I'm sorry, Bobby, but I'm afraid I was a little too optimistic. It's a bit further in the future than I realized when I wrote you," Sylvia temporized.

Fortunately for her, she did not have to go more into detail, as the door opened quietly and Sir Edward Hutton strolled in. Faultlessly dressed, a large white gardenia in his buttonhole, this tall, slightly bald man of the indefinite forties was not prepossessing. There was something evasive about the watery blue eyes and lined, dissipated face which affected Bobby uncomfortably.

"Hello, Austin. Glad to see you again. Good trip back, I hope," he said, shaking hands.

"Pretty good, thank you, though the weather was nothing to write home about." He glanced at his watch. "After six! I'm afraid now I must run along. See you again soon—night, Sylvia."

"Don't forget you're dining tomorrow. Dinner's at eight," she called after him as he went out.

AS HE walked down the stairs and out into the street, Bobby felt a very grateful sense of relief that the dreaded interview was behind him, and he found no difficulty in inventing excuses for Sylvia's outburst of rage. It is never difficult to forgive temper inspired by affection for one's self. And further—his judgment had been justified. Now there was no need for the pretense, the prospect of which had been so distasteful. He had been sure all along that Sylvia was the sort of woman that one could deal with honestly. And in the end how perfectly she had seen it from his point of view; and agreed with it! Entirely convinced that everything was as it should be, he complimented himself on a difficult situation cleverly handled.

Alone—for Sir Edward did not linger long when he had sounded his wife's mood—Sylvia lighted a cigarette and, dropping into a chair, smoked it with long, hard puffs. Half finished she threw it away and lit a second. A third and a fourth followed. The logs in the fireplace burned out until nothing remained but the red ashes, fast dying to a cold gray. Still she sat, staring before her—consumed by, and oblivious to, everything except one overpowering emotion—hate.

So he had discussed her with Kathleen Lawrence! She had advised him to pretend—to make it easy for her. More than anything else, that enraged her.

All the happenings of the afternoon passed in review through her brain. She had begged for his love—humiliating enough in itself—and he had offered her pity! "I'm sorry." She writhed at the memory of the words. As she pondered, her hate and determination became fixed. All of the love which she had felt for him turned to venom. She would ruin him—absolutely and irrevocably. But how? He had no enemies—his easy-going, careless disposition was the sort which seemed only to inspire friendship. Position—now that he had quit diplomacy, that was entirely a personal matter. His position and his friends were one and the same thing. Money? Of course—there was a beginning!

Abruptly she rose from her chair, and crossed the dark room to the telephone which was on the table in one corner. On the way she stopped to turn on one of the lamps.

"Give me Victoria 3423, please. . . . Hello, I'd like to speak to Sir Edward Dorne. . . . Say that it is Lady Sylvia Hutton. . . .

"Is that you, Edward? . . . Yes. It's Sylvia. I called up to find out whether, by any chance, you are free for the week-end. I want you to come to Brierly. . . .

"I'm sorry. I was afraid I was too late. But I've just decided to go down. Now I must hang up and get some one else to fill your place—oh, one minute. I almost forgot to tell you. You remember you promised me to find Austin a place in your bank. . . . He doesn't want it; so I won't have to worry you after all. . . .

"Oh, no! He is quite definitely out of diplomacy. I'm afraid it is a case of an exaggerated opinion of his own importance. I had a talk with him this afternoon and he seems to have ideas of ten thousand a year. So, thinking of the thousand pounds we thought such a lot, I said nothing. If you happen to see him, please forget I ever mentioned the subject. He'd never be serious,

anyway. He's much too occupied with racing and bridge. . . .

"Oh, yes, for tremendous sums. Don't say I said so—but it's quite true. . . .

"Now, I must hang up and call some one else. So sorry that you can't come for the week-end. Another time. Good-by!"

Sylvia hung up the receiver. "That's done, Mr. Bobby Austin—and a nice reputation you will find you have in the City when you go there." She smiled maliciously. Undependable, a gambler and puffed up with his own importance—not a very favorable report to precede one in the City.

But this was only a beginning. Nothing really. Only ruin, absolute and inescapable, would satisfy. She sat for a long time thinking. A future day and possibly diminished funds started a new train of thought. Then suddenly a bit of Bobby's conversation of the afternoon flashed into her memory. Adèle Audley! She and Bobby had quarreled over bridge on Vera's yacht, on the way up from Monte Carlo. A slow, crafty smile crept into her eyes and, unsuspected, mean little lines showed around the corners of her mouth. The plan grew—detail followed detail until she had it all. It would take time—but it would work.

"It's finished, is it, Mr. Austin?" As she repeated his words her laugh rang out oddly in the quiet room. "Finished!" Again she laughed. "Ah, Bobby, my very good friend, do you think so? It's only just begun."

SOMETIME during the week which followed his interview with Lady Sylvia, Bobby dismissed any last, slight misgiving which he might have felt with regard to her sincerity. There was nothing to indicate that her acceptance of their new relationship was any less genuine than his own.

At first he had felt an awkward self-consciousness when alone with her. Whether she divined this or not, she so managed it that the situation rarely occurred; and although they were almost daily seen somewhere together, lunching, dining, at the play, it was usually in public. Once, when he chanced to be the last guest to leave a dinner party which she had given, she suggested that he sit and smoke another cigarette before going, and more by insinuation than actual words convinced him that she not only accepted, but preferred, him in his new rôle. Once the subject had been brought up, it was easy afterward to discuss it—which she did to the point of smiling over their past infatuation as one does at some childhood antic.

The result was that Bobby assumed a sincere friendship and fell into talking to her of himself, his plans for the future, as frankly as he had in the past. Except for the single reference to Kathleen Lawrence which unwittingly he had made on the day of his arrival, he never again mentioned her name. How often he wrote to her—or if at all—Sylvia could only guess. Which was just as well, considering the frequency with which Searle was sent to post letters to her.

Another question was not discussed, because Bobby overlooked that there could be any reason for speaking to Sylvia of it. Unconsciously he now attributed to the public a knowledge of the innocence of their intimacy, as in the past he had of its guilt. And that their world noticed, or commented on, the frequency with which he and Sylvia were together, never occurred to him.

"How you must have laughed over my Monte Carlo letters!" Vera said one afternoon when the two women were alone together.

"I don't recall anything frightfully witty in them. Sorry to disappoint you, dear."

"Oh, not that way. About Bobby, I mean, and my frantic advice. It's more than evident that you knew just how strong a hold you had on him."

"What makes you say that?"

"Don't be so coy—certainly not with me," Vera retorted. "He has been your shadow ever since he got back to London."

"I didn't realize that it had been noticeable."

"Well, it has been—to the extent that people have even begun talking again, and you'll admit that it takes a good deal to make people interest themselves in a three-year-old scandal."

"Quite true. After three years I thought any affair became respectable. So much so that I rather hesitated about being seen dining alone with my husband the other night."

After Vera left, Sylvia reviewed their conversation with a great deal of satisfaction. Everything was proceeding as she

had intended. To the world, Bobby was still hers.

AUSTIN accepted an invitation to spend a week-end at Cobworth Manor, and it was with a very pleasurable anticipation of the coming two days that he stepped out of the motor when it drew up before the door of Sir Ralph Stuart's country place.

It was late and he went at once to his room to bathe and change. Dressed, he descended to the drawing-room, where he found that Lady Stuart, Sir Ralph and most of their guests had preceded him. After speaking to his hostess, he turned to Sir Ralph, who stood beside her.

"Nice to see you again at Cobworth, Austin," Sir Ralph said as the two men shook hands. "It has been more than a year, I'd say, since you were last here."

"Quite that, but I lunched with you very recently, you remember. The day that Elizabeth won from Miss Royce at Cannes."

The entrance of that young lady and two girls of the week-end party put an end to their conversation, and before he had a chance to cross the room to speak to her, the butler announced dinner.

"We will go in just anyway," Lady Stuart said. "This party is most informal, as you all see."

As they walked down the hall to the dining-room, Bobby managed to say to Elizabeth, "Sorry that I couldn't get down in time for tennis, but I was unexpectedly detained in town."

"Pooh!" she laughed. "What detained you? A long drawn-out game for the last rubber, I imagine. Well, I hope you won it!"

Bobby grinned, acknowledging the correctness of her guess.

At the table he found himself next to her, and quite naturally their conversation began with their respective doings since they had last met at Cannes.

"I haven't been to town once since we came back from the Riviera," she informed him. "We stopped for a while in Paris, where I bought the most divine clothes. Poor Mother, she's desperate and determined to leave nothing undone to insure that this will be my last appearance in London as the little Stuart girl. Terrible, isn't it? I'm twenty-three and this will be my fifth season, if you include odd bits of the war ones. You'd better be careful or Mother might even consider you. Now that's a nice back-hand one, but don't let it crush you. And please tell Hudson whether you will have sherry or not. If you won't have any, there are some others farther down the table who will, I'm sure."

"And so will I," Bobby replied, laughing. "When do you go to town?" he continued, taking a sip from his glass.

Elizabeth made a little grimace. "Very soon now—too soon. I love the country at this time of the year, almost better than at any other. Why any one should want to be in the heat and rush of a London season when it is so beautiful in the country, is beyond me."

"It seems to me that you cover up this great distaste of yours quite well. During the season you never have a free minute."

"What do you expect? As long as I have to be there, I might as well make the best of it. And I really do adore dancing," she admitted.

"I'm getting rather fed up with London seasons myself. Last one was an awful bore."

Elizabeth smiled skeptically and turned to talk to young Lord Helmsford who sat on her other side.

"NOW tell me about yourself," she said later. "Have you begun your career as a financier in the City?"

Bobby shook his head. "Not yet. Nobody seems to be clamoring for my distinguished services."

"But I thought that all that part was already arranged?"

"So did I."

"Then what happened?"

"I'm sure I don't know. There was a mix-up somewhere. I got tired of waiting, and have been to see no end of people on my own. But they all seem to think it is a joke—my working. Maybe it is."

"I can't say that you are just my idea of a serious young man of affairs."

"Why not? What's wrong with me?"

"I'm never serious at dinner and if I were you might think me rude as well. But if you really want to know why I think so, ask me some other time and I'll tell you. Now I see that Mother thinks that we should leave you men," she added as she rose from the table and, with the other women, left the dining-room.

Any curiosity which Bobby may have felt remained unsatisfied, for when the men joined the rest of the party in the drawing-room, mild bridge was at once begun and continued all evening.

"Tennis or golf in the morning?" Elizabeth questioned as the party broke up about midnight.

Bobby made a wry face.

"Most certainly not," she said with exaggerated firmness. "If you think you are going to be allowed to stay in bed until lunch time, you're mistaken. You can do that all week in town. In the country you must get up and earn your luncheon. Which shall it be?"

"Will you take me on at golf?"

"Yes, if you will give me half a stroke."

"Then golf it will be," Bobby decided.

Ten o'clock was the hour set, and prompt to the minute Elizabeth came down, looking as fresh and fit as he felt. "Hello, lazy man!" she called, as she saw Bob standing in the hall at the foot of the stairs. "Thought that I would have to wait at least a half hour for you. You haven't breakfasted yet, have you?"

"Hours ago! And the motor is waiting. Ready?"

To the golf course was only a short run in the car, and half an hour later they were driving off the first tee. It was a perfect spring day, much more conducive to lazy strolling and conversation than to golf, and their early enthusiasm for the game rapidly waned. At the sixth hole, which commanded a wide view of the countryside, Bobby suggested that they stop and rest.

"Now tell me," he said as they seated themselves on the grass. "What did you mean by what you said at dinner last night?"

Elizabeth drew a long breath. "I hardly know how. . . . But do you think that racing every day, playing as much bridge as you do and, above all, being identified with the set that you are, is calculated to make any one take you very seriously?

"One minute and I am through," she insisted as Bobby tried to interrupt. "You asked me to tell you what I thought and I am going to finish it. I don't for a minute think that you realize how the rest of London looks on that crowd. They are a rotten lot. Clever—but rotters, all of them, from Sylvia Hutton down. Now go on and be furious at me for saying it—but remember you asked me to. So there!" She looked up at him with an uncertain smile.

"Thank you for being so frank," he replied quite simply and sincerely. "I think you are mistaken, though."

"Naturally you do. You are not the first man that Sylvia has fascinated into seeing things as she does. In a way, she is a very wonderful woman."

"I wouldn't say that I was fascinated."

"Every one else does. But that is neither here nor there. My opinion of Sylvia Hutton is nothing new to you. I told you a very long time ago what I thought of her—and I have had no reason to alter my opinion since. Now come and let's finish our game."

AFTER dinner that evening he returned to the subject. "Do you think that I am generally considered to be entirely of Lady Sylvia's entourage?" he asked after they had been walking for some time up and down the stone-flagged terrace.

Elizabeth glanced up at him with a puzzled smile. "What else could any one possibly think? For three years you were her shadow and now you return to London and from all that I have heard—as you know, I haven't been there myself—you are seen about together more than ever. That you are devoted is evident."

"That all depends on what you mean by 'devoted.' We are very, very good friends, and that's all."

"Bosh! I'm not so simple as all that. Although to Mother's great chagrin and mortification I haven't acquired a husband during my four seasons in London—I've managed to pick up a certain amount of worldly wisdom. And my two years driving an ambulance in France weren't altogether wasted. When a young man of twenty-odd attaches himself to our most famous siren of forty and then tries to tell me that they are just friends—well!" Elizabeth paused and concluded with a laugh.

"But it's true, I promise you," Bobby persisted.

Elizabeth laughed unconcernedly. "All right, Bob. . . . Now tell me, what are your plans for Ascot? We are doing it from town, and if you are, why not come with us? There will be lots of room in the car."

"Thanks, but I am going to be in the

country. Sylvia has taken Trent for Ascot week, and has asked me down."

Elizabeth burst out laughing, and in spite of himself Bobby joined.

Bobby returned to London the following morning, arriving just in time to keep a luncheon appointment with Scott of the Embassy, whom he found waiting for him when he arrived at the Berkeley.

"Sorry if I'm late," he apologized, "but I've just arrived in town from the country. Spent the week-end down at Cobworth—the Stuarts' place."

"What a funny place for you to be!" Scott answered.

"Funny? Why funny?"

"Oh, I don't know. I didn't imagine you cared for anything as tame as that. Scotch and soda for breakfast and an all-night gamble was about your speed, I thought. That's how your crowd is generally supposed to spend their time."

"For God's sake, shut up! I'm getting pretty damned sick of this 'my crowd' business," Bobby snapped pettishly.

Bob found himself becoming supersensitive on this point. Everywhere he went he discovered that he was definitely associated in people's minds with the side of London social life typified by Sylvia and Vera, of which illicit amours and gambling were the chief concomitants. This background did not serve as a recommendation to financiers who had attractive jobs to offer.

He began to realize that he had never really known what boredom was. It was very difficult to put in the time between luncheon and dinner. Each day in London was exactly like its predecessor. He had no real interest, the pursuit of which would give zest to the day. There was not even the spice of novelty in any of the numerous things he did. The futility of attempting to coax pleasure to come at his bidding daily became more apparent, and the task of disposing of each recurring twenty-four hours proportionately increased in difficulty.

His efforts at securing something—no matter what—in the City had shown him the value which the world places on the services of an untrained man. More than once he had been asked the question, "What can you do?" to which he had been obliged to answer, "I don't know." Undoubtedly his years in diplomacy had unfitted him for anything else—to go back to that was impossible. He could not afford it. With each promotion the expense, attendant on its added importance, became double or treble the corresponding increase in salary. But what else was there to be done! Possibly, if he explained the situation, Washington might find some place—in the East, perhaps—where salary and imperative expenses were not so hopelessly disproportionate. After all, it might be the best thing to do. Anyhow he would talk to Scott about it.

Scott was pleased at Bobby's decision and promised to do what he could for him. His early record had been such that he thought Washington might be glad to give him another chance.

IN RESPONSE to a telephone message, Bobby dropped in at Lady Sylvia's for tea and found Vera Hamilton there before him. The Ascot party was under discussion when the butler announced him.

The women were deep in debating what they would wear. After about twenty minutes of this Bobby broke in to remind Sylvia that she hadn't told him who her guests would be.

"Haven't I? I thought I had. There will be Vera of course, for one," she said, ticking them off on her fingers. "Adèle Audley, two."

"Why Lady Audley? You had better keep us well separated or she'll murder me."

"Oh, forget that silly bridge row you two had. No doubt she's forgotten all about it. If Adèle Audley remembered all her bridge rows there would be no one in London she could even bow to."

"Number three, Bettina Brinton."

Bobby looked up in astonishment. "But I thought you and Vera disliked her so!"

"We do—that's why she's being invited."

"You dislike her. Then why, please, ask her to an Ascot party?" Bobby asked, bewildered. "Why?"

"Because she will come to my party, but won't go to the races."

Bobby shook his head. "I give it up; you're talking in riddles to me."

"We really ought not to explain to him, ought we, Vera? It doesn't do for men to get too clear an insight into feminine psychology."

"Do, please," Bobby begged. "It's all over my head."

"Very well," Vera agreed. "To go to an Ascot, means to go into the Royal Enclosure, doesn't it?"

Bobby nodded. "For us, yes."

"Even with you away, we still know a good deal about what goes on in your Embassy. This year there are eighty Enclosure tickets allotted to you, and there are several hundred of your compatriots who think themselves of sufficient importance to be entitled to one of them. Clever as your Ambassador is, he can't make eighty tickets cover two or three hundred applications. Mrs. Brinton thinks herself among the elect. She isn't. In the meantime she had accepted Sylvia's invitation for the week. Now do you see?"

Bobby shook his head.

"Idiot! In a day or two she will find out that she is not to receive her ticket. What is she to do? Trapped if she comes to the party—trapped if she gets ill at the last moment and doesn't. Every one knows that no American woman would avoid her first Ascot in the Royal Enclosure unless she were actually in her coffin or had to wear a last year's dress. So Mrs. Brinton is now in the position where she will be forced to admit to the world that at home she is more or less a social nobody."

"And you two take all this trouble to gratify your spite against her! I don't understand at all."

"Of course you don't; you're a man. Men are used to fighting with their hands—the thing is physical—once done, it's over with. We fight differently, but as effectively as you, possibly more so."

"A pretty rotten deal, I call it. And who is number four for the knife?"

"No one else," Sylvia announced from her place at the tea table. "The only other woman is Julia Archdale."

"I suppose you asked her so that she could spread the glad tidings of the social eclipse of Mrs. Brinton to the few that Lady Audley might miss."

"There, Vera, see how quickly he's learning. He saw that without being told."

They all laughed.

"And what men have you?"

"Edward, Roddy, and yourself, three—and who are the others, Vera? Oh, yes! George Eddington, Colton and a man from the Italian Embassy and the French Military Attaché. I have room for several more men but haven't asked any one yet. Do you want to suggest some one?"

"Thanks, no," Bobby said. "I don't believe so."

As Bobby walked down Grosvenor Street, he was thinking of Bettina Brinton. Obeying a sudden impulse, he hailed a passing taxi and directed the driver to take him to his club. When he arrived there, as he expected, he found Scott.

"Come over here a minute, Scotty, I want to speak to you," he said, as he entered the room where Scott was sitting with two other men.

"Do you know whether Mrs. Brinton's name was on the Ascot list which the Ambassador sent in?"

"No, it wasn't."

The two men talked for a few minutes and as they rose to join Scott's party, Bobby said, "If you can manage it, I'll appreciate it a lot."

"I'll do my best," Scott promised.

ON THE afternoon of Friday before Ascot, Bobby motored with Sylvia and Vera down to Trent, the house which the Huttons had taken for the week's racing.

The next two days were much like any week-end party, but even for Lady Sylvia's very easy-going parties, there was less restraint than usual. Every one drank a great deal during dinner and the men lingered a disgracefully long time over their port and liqueurs. All of which Lady Sylvia seemed to encourage. It was evident that she was determined to stimulate her party's gaiety.

Even Lady Audley thawed and on Monday night at the end of a very hard-fought rubber which Bobby, as her partner, won by a brilliantly played hand, she declared that all was right with the world and that Bobby was her friend forever.

On Tuesday morning Bobby awoke at eleven and looked out on a cloudless day—and for England, a hot one. Thinking of the clothes he must wear, he lay swearing at the weather. Tired of this he got up, drank the coffee which was brought to his room, and began dressing.

Several of the party had preceded him downstairs and were standing round the

table on which were a decanter of port and a plate of biscuits. Pouring out a glass he turned to Mrs. Brinton.

It was evident that she had given more than the ordinary amount of planning to her costume, and the result was one which only an American woman could achieve. The English woman is, no doubt, the most beautiful woman in the world in the evening when a low-cut gown can show to advantage her unrivaled skin and coloring. The French and Viennese vie with each other for the decision as to chic. But in day clothes—whatever may be their technical terminology—the American woman is unchallenged.

"As this is your first Ascot, do let me pilot you about," Bobby said, looking at her approvingly. "I'd love to see it all through the eyes of some one who is seeing it with the enthusiasm of the first time."

"Do, please, and don't let me miss anything I ought to see."

"By the way, where is your badge?"

Mrs. Brinton indicated her bag.

"You must pin it on. It saves such a lot of bother going in and out of the Enclosure if you have it where the men at the entrances can see it easily."

Mrs. Brinton did as directed, and Bobby had hard work suppressing a smile when he caught sight of Vera's face while she watched this operation.

"The joke is certainly on Sylvia and me," that lady said a little later when she and Bobby happened to be standing alone together.

"How in the name of Heaven did she get her Enclosure ticket? Sylvia and I have been waiting all morning for her maid to come around and report the expected headache. Instead, here she is unconcernedly pinning on her badge—and worse still, pinning it on much the smartest costume of the party. She does look wonderfully well—much as I hate to admit it. But how she managed to get her Enclosure ticket I can't imagine."

"Nor can I," Bobby announced blandly.

The motors were lined up at the door, and when Sylvia at last came down they started for the race-course, Bobby in the car with Mrs. Brinton and the men from the French and Italian Embassies.

As Trent is on the side of Ascot away from London, they escaped the heavy traffic which now, no doubt, congested the roads from town to the race-course. Several days of rain had washed fields and hedges until every leaf and blade of grass glistened green in the hot sunshine. Blossoming hedges on either side of the roadway filled the air with their perfume. Like the party in the motor, the countryside was decked in holiday attire.

In her thin, cool dress, Bettina leaned back in her seat enjoying immensely the warm, cloudless day. "Delicious," she murmured to no one in particular.

As they approached the course, traffic became increasingly heavy, and it was at a snail's pace that they finally arrived at the place where their motor was to be parked. Without waiting for the others, Bobby and Mrs. Brinton strolled off together.

She was full of interest in it all and her enthusiasm amply repaid him for his pains. The Paddock delighted her, as well it might. Gaily dressed women and black-coated men wandered in twos and threes over the springy turf—emerald except where the trees with their thick foliage cast black-green shadows. Blanketed thoroughbreds, led by vacant-faced stable boys, minced delicately past appraising spectators who lined the circle where they were being marched.

Leaving the Paddock, Bobby led the way to the Enclosure. How many ambitious careers had been wrecked by that insignificant little barrier which separated the social sheep and goats!

The scene inside the Enclosure was—but for the absence of the horses—not unlike the one in the Paddock which they had just quitted, except that here there were no men in other than formal dress. Beyond the fence on the farther side of the Enclosure were lined the book-makers. After making his bet on the first race Bobby led Mrs. Brinton to a place where she would have an unobstructed view of the arrival of the Royal party.

AFTER the horse that carried the colors which he had backed flashed past the stands, an easy winner of the first race, Bobby suggested luncheon. "Unless you expect to be sent for to come to lunch with the King," he said banteringly, "I propose that we walk over to the Marlborough Club Tent and get something to eat."

Bettina declared herself ravenous, and so they left for the tent, whose white top showed through the trees a hundred yards or more away. On their way, Elizabeth Stuart waved at Bobby as she caught sight of him through the crowd.

"What an attractive-looking girl!" Mrs. Brinton said.

"Isn't she! I want to introduce you as soon as I get an opportunity. You'll like her. She's just as attractive as she looks."

The opportunity arose sooner than he expected. When they arrived at the tent, there was not a single vacant table. Elizabeth and Helmsford were seated at one near the entrance, at which were two vacant chairs. Realizing the situation, she called to Bobby and suggested that he and Mrs. Brinton sit with them, which they did. Bobby could not fail to notice how much more at ease she seemed to be than when she was with any of the Trent party.

After lunch, the four returned to the Enclosure together, and after explaining that at Ascot women, theoretically, were not supposed to bet, Bobby left her with Elizabeth and Helmsford while he went to place his bet, and one for her and Elizabeth, with his book-makers.

On his way to rejoin them he met Sylvia and stopped to talk to her. "Has your private information bureau told you what will win the next race?"

Sylvia shook her head. "No, I've got nothing at all for today. But tomorrow you'd better keep very close to me. Now come help me to find Vera. I've been looking for her ever since luncheon." And for the next hour they walked about together. A good many smiles were exchanged behind their backs, as laughing, and seemingly very much occupied with each other, they passed from one group of acquaintances to another.

Sylvia's statement that horses never ran true to form at Ascot seemed borne out by results that day. Bobby's win on the first race was his only one, and on his way home as he totaled up his bets—whose amounts he had scribbled on the margin of his program—he found that his day had been a very expensive one.

"How did you come out on the day, Bobby?" Lady Sylvia questioned as he joined a group which had gathered around the tea-table set in the shade of a big elm on the lawn at Trent.

"Rotten, thanks," he answered. "After the first race, I never backed a winner."

"How unfortunate for the rest of the party! Now I suppose you'll make up your losings out of us after dinner. We've all decided, though, not to let you play bridge. You're too good. So you'll have to play poker tonight."

"Just as you say." And so it happened that Bobby was one of those who, as it turned out, were to make up a nightly poker game in which the amounts that changed hands were far in excess of anything he had ever known either at Brierly or at Sylvia's town house.

His unexpressed surprise at this would have been much greater if he could have heard a remark which his hostess made to Mrs. Brinton, Lady Audley and Mrs. Archdale, as the four women sat arranging piles of counters, while they waited for the men to join them after dinner.

"I feel rather guilty," she said, "for suggesting that Bobby play poker. Of course, every one knows, poor boy, that he has no money and it might be rather serious for him if he had a run of bad luck at the stakes we are going to play. But certainly he'll win. He always does, with his uncanny luck, so I shan't worry."

If Lady Sylvia herself had determined the size of the stakes, Mrs. Brinton vaguely wondered why she had not made them smaller. Personally, she would have been more than content to play for half the amount—but while she was considering whether or not she should propose it, the men came in, and they began the first session of their momentous nightly game.

WEDNESDAY was Cup Day at Ascot and in deference to the race for the King's Trophy, all the women wore their most elaborate toilettes. The throng assembled in the Enclosure was London society at its smartest.

Just before the horses went to the post for the big race of the day, Sylvia joined Bobby in the Paddock, where he had gone to have a last look at the animals that were to run. Calling him aside, she asked whether he had made any bet on the race.

Bobby shook his head. "No, I've decided not to have one. As far as I can see, the Rajah ought to win easily—and they've made him such a hot favorite that you can't

get even money. To me it looks like a good race to let alone."

"Not if you know as much as I do," Lady Sylvia informed him. "I've just made my bet—and a much bigger one than I usually allow myself. I'm backing Stargelt."

Barring the favorite, Bobby knew that this little black horse was easily the best animal in the race—but not quite good enough to beat the Rajah.

In answer to the doubt expressed by his skeptically raised eyebrows, she confided that she had learned from a most trustworthy source that the favorite had hurt himself in his box the previous night and that his stable, whose heavy backing, as much as anything else, had made him such a top-heavy favorite, had now shifted to Stargelt, who stood second in the betting.

Bobby made no comment and Lady Sylvia exclaimed petulantly: "If a man had told you this, you couldn't wait to make a bet; but because a woman gives you the information, you laugh at it and pay no attention to it."

"Not at all," Bobby replied. He was too experienced a race-goer to disregard any last-minute information, or to accept it blindly. "I'm going now to see what I can find out," he said, and left her and hurried to the Enclosure. As he crossed it, he learned from a racing acquaintance that the betting on Stargelt was six to one. The odds dropped rapidly from six to five, then to four. When they reached three, he concluded that Lady Sylvia's information was not only correct, but also was in the possession of the ring. Hesitating no longer, he passed from one to the other of his book-makers, making a bet with each. He had determined either to recoup all of his losses of the week, or to lose very much more than he had ever lost before on a single race.

Waiting until the horses had gone to the post, he walked slowly up into the stand to watch the race, feeling distinctly nervous and very uneasy as to the result. The easy stride of the favorite, as he galloped past the stand, seemed to give the lie to the rumored injury.

Seeing Elizabeth Stuart, he went and stood beside her.

"This race is already as good as run, I suppose," she commented as he joined her. "The Rajah easily outclasses the field."

"Bad news for me if you're right. I've backed Stargelt."

Elizabeth turned to him in astonishment. "To beat the Rajah at this distance? You're mad."

"I've just been told that he hurt himself and can't last—and the betting certainly makes it look that way."

Elizabeth made a wry mouth as slowly she shook her head in disbelief.

The crowd's roar, "They're off," ended the discussion and riveted all their attention on the race.

What had been a knot of shifting, kaleidoscopic colors momentarily became still; then streamed down the course like a many-hued ribbon—the blue and white stripes of Stargelt's jockey showing two lengths ahead of the field, which bunched, ran behind him, content to let him set the pace.

Stargelt began to draw away and as he did the head and shoulders of the big chestnut favorite emerged from the welter of crouched jockeys and flying horses—and stayed there, the same two lengths behind the leader.

One after another, various horses challenged, only to drop back beaten. O'Dowl on the favorite was riding easily, saving his mount.

"Buller's riding like a damn fool," Bobby muttered to himself. "Why doesn't he let some one else set the pace?"

But the horses turned into the stretch, their relative position unchanged—Stargelt still in front, the favorite the same two lengths behind him. Then O'Dowl began to ride. Almost at once daylight showed between the Rajah and the other horses, as his jockey let out the big chestnut and went after the flying black horse out in front. He cut the lead in two and the stands roared. The Rajah drew still closer. Stargelt, with another burst of speed, tried to distance the gaining favorite. The race was now between these two—the rest of the field hopelessly in the rear.

"THE Rajah wins!" Elizabeth cried exultantly, as Stargelt's jockey began to use his whip, "Stargelt's through!" She glanced at Bobby quickly, and, after one look at his face, said no more. Both her words and the ensuing silence were unnoticed by him as, his face white and every muscle of his body tense, he watched the

two horses as they neared the winning post, neck and neck.

O'Dowl's crimson silk sleeve flashed once in the sunlight. With the sting of the descending whip the favorite leaped ahead and amid roars of cheering raced past the winning post, winner by half a length.

Bobby swallowed hard, moistened his lips, and turned to Elizabeth. "It was a great race anyway," he said, and managed a very good imitation of an unconcerned smile. "Hope you had a nice big bet on the winner."

But his smile was not quite good enough to deceive her. She had seen his face go white when Stargelt had faltered. She knew racing, and what that expression meant. Bobby was hard hit.

"I hope you didn't lose a terrible lot. Did you?" She laid her hand lightly, solicitously on his arm.

"A good deal, I'm afraid," he answered. This time his smile was better.

"Bobby!" Sylvia cried, hurrying up to them. "Where have you been? I searched for you everywhere before the race to tell you to lay off anything you had put on Stargelt. At the very last minute I found out that, in spite of his injury, his stable was still backing the Rajah."

"Unlucky for me that I missed you. I backed Stargelt to the limit."

"What a pity! Never mind; we'll have to get it all back on the next race. Let's go find out something about it. Tricky game, racing, no?"

But he did not win it back on the next race, or the next, and left the course that afternoon with the uncomfortable realization that the following Monday, when he would have to send settlement checks to his book-makers, bade fair to be a very disagreeable day.

Back at Trent, he refused tea for a whisky and soda—quickly followed by another. He was in a very bad humor—and Lady Sylvia's jocular solicitude about his losses, expressed before the rest of the party, somehow managed to increase it.

The next day was no better—worse, if anything. It was one of those days when everything goes wrong from the start. The racing proved to be neither pleasant nor profitable. A remark of Sylvia's overheard as he entered the drawing-room to join the women already waiting at the poker table after dinner, was all that was needed to make his day altogether disagreeable.

"I'm serious," she was saying to the other women. "What he will do, I can't imagine. You know—everybody does—that he has no money, and now he hasn't even his salary from the Embassy to help out. How he will ever settle with his bookmakers on Monday, I can't conceive. But it's no use trying to keep him from gambling. I've tried, again and again, and you see the result."

As he took his seat at the table, Bobby was furious. What the devil was Sylvia thinking about, continually harping on his losings—and of all people, why choose Adèle Audley and Julia Archdale to talk to about his finances and his losses? And it was his own affair, anyway. What had come over Sylvia? Whatever else she might be, he had never before known her to be garrulous.

An exasperating succession of hands, just good enough to bet on and lose, increased both his ill humor and his indebtedness; and with a gambler's superstition, he was very much pleased when Mrs. Archdale, after losing a big pool, threw down her cards and turned petulantly to her hostess, saying: "For God's sake, Sylvia, can't we ever have anything but red cards? Isn't there a blue pack in the house? Red is always unlucky for me."

"I'm terribly sorry, but there isn't, I'm afraid. Leave anything to servants and if there is a wrong way to do it, they'll find it. I told the butler to see that plenty of cards were sent down here. There were—boxes of them, all red."

"What a bore!" Mrs. Archdale replied, as she picked up the despised red cards and began to deal.

As the evening progressed, Bobby, with increasing frequency, left the table to replenish the glass, and his play became correspondingly reckless. Once, as he arose, Mrs. Brinton essayed a timid head-shake accompanied by an apologetic smile. Bobby smiled in return but refilled his glass.

IT HAD almost reached the hour agreed upon for ending the game. Sylvia was dealing and while she did, Bobby, from force of habit totaled up the amount already in the center of the table, and noted that it was quite a large sum.

Two aces of spades! . . . For the first time Bobby realized how tremendously grave the situation was. It looked worse than black.

He picked up his cards, two black aces, two eights of the same color, and a red queen. The dead man's hand, in the game's parlance. "One card, please," he said, discarding the queen.

Sylvia, dealing, gave it to him and passed on to Lady Audley, who took two. Colton and the Frenchman each took three. None of the other players drew.

"I bet ten pounds," Lady Audley said, placing a counter for the amount in the center of the table.

"And ten more," Colton, who sat next to her, decided after a glance at his hand.

The Frenchman declined to bet and threw his useless cards on the table. Lady Sylvia picked them up and put them with what remained of the pack.

Bobby slipped the single card which he had asked for among the four which he had kept, and before looking to see what he had drawn, shuffled the cards three times—a superstitious habit acquired back in his university days.

"Stop fiddling with your cards and say what you'll do," Lady Audley demanded.

Very slowly he looked at them—slipping them back one by one and disclosing only the tiniest edge of each. The first was the ace of spades, next the eight of the same suit, then the eight of clubs and the club ace. Still more slowly he looked at the last card—it was the ace of diamonds. "And twenty pounds more," he said, his face expressionless.

"And another fifty," Lady Audley announced.

Colton evidently fancied his hand, for he raised the bet, as Bobby did in his turn.

As wager followed wager, until the biggest pool of the evening was in the center of the table, the interest of every one became fixed on the three contesting players.

The betting continued until a final, "And a hundred more," from Bobby was called by both Lady Audley and Colton. Every one leaned forward, Lady Sylvia absent-mindedly shuffling the cards she still held.

"A full house—aces on eights," Bobby said, spreading out his hand: the two black eights and the aces of diamonds, clubs and spades.

As he did so, the pack with which she had been toying slipped from her hand and spread face upward on the table. At the sound, every one turned and looked.

Incredulous, Bob's eyes followed Lady Audley's pregnant glance from his cards to the upturned pack from which they had been dealt!

Another ace of spades was among the undealt cards!

FOR a moment Bobby sat staring stupidly. Two aces of spades! What did it mean? Two aces of spades! Damn those drinks—he couldn't think—anyway not quickly. "First time I ever saw anything like this," he said slowly. "We must have got another pack mixed with ours. At any rate, my hand's out—I lose."

Then he looked up. A slow flush mounted to his face as he interpreted the expression in Adèle Audley's eyes. His glance passed to Colton's face. Colton was evidently puzzled—and yes, there was a touch of suspicion there as well. Bettina Brinton smiled, as his eyes met hers. She was puzzled but nothing more. His glance passed around the table. Every one was looking straight at him except Sylvia. Her eyes were on the table and he could guess nothing of her thoughts. "Look at the rest of the cards—there must be other extra ones mixed in," he suggested, and felt his face getting red.

Lady Audley picked them up and methodically sorted the suits. "The pack is quite all right, except for the extra ace in your hand," she announced meaningly.

With stunning clearness the situation stood revealed to him. His brain cleared, and for the first time, he realized how tremendously grave the situation was.

It looked worse than black. He was not rich. He had lost heavily every day at the races. There were not five more malicious tongues in all London than five of the old women—male and female—who sat at the table. And now, with a very big amount at stake, his winning hand held an inexplainable ace. Where had the hellish thing come from?

"God Almighty—you don't think I put the card in my hand?" His voice, unexpectedly loud, sounded strange even to himself.

The rest of the party at the bridge tables at the other end of the room looked inquiringly across at the poker players.

Nobody spoke. Bobby glanced appealingly at Sylvia, but she would not look at him.

"I know no more than you do where the damn thing came from," he continued, his face now a bright crimson. "Why do you insinuate that I do?"

"Nobody has insinuated anything. The extra ace of spades in your winning hand is a fact, not an insinuation. We're trying to discover where that came from," Colton put in. His voice, nastily full of meaning, was loud enough for every one in the room to hear.

Edward Hutton arose from his place at one of the bridge tables and came across the room. "What's wrong?" he inquired quietly.

Lady Audley took it upon herself to answer. She was in her element. What a scandal she would have to report to eager listeners the next day at Ascot! "Mr. Austin has just won that," she said, pointing to the big pile of counters which still lay in the center of the table, "on a hand which had an ace of spades in it. Unaccountably, there's another ace of spades in the undealt part of the pack."

Lord Hutton looked very grave as he picked up the two cards and turned them over, disclosing identical red backs. "Suppose we leave the others in here," he suggested with a nod of his head toward the bridge players, "and go into the smoking-room to get to the bottom of all this."

"I've been practically accused of cheating before the whole room. I'd prefer to have it out here," Bobby said quickly, turning to Sir Edward. "I know no more about it than you do, but as it appeared in my hand, it puts me in a very awkward position, especially as I won."

"*Very* awkward," Lady Audley repeated in a cutting aside.

"Please," Sir Edward appealed, looking at her, "there must be a mistake and it's too serious not to be straightened out at once."

"If it can be," she remarked, not at all abashed at her reproof.

"Can anybody help to explain it?" He looked around the table, ignoring the remark.

Nobody spoke. Apparently none had explanations to offer.

"Who was dealing?" he questioned.

"I was," his wife answered. "Bobby asked for one card which I gave him. Later, I accidentally dropped the rest of the pack and it fell face upward on the table. The ace of spades was in it." Sylvia's voice was very low and reluctant—as if she realized how damaging to Bobby was what she had to confess.

Edward Hutton turned to the others, but there seemed nothing more to be added.

"That's as much as any of us knows," Colton said in answer to his host's questioning glance. There was no doubt as to his opinion.

Bobby jumped to his feet, overturning his chair, which fell in a crash behind him. Along with anger a sort of hunted fear had come into his eyes. "I know nothing—absolutely nothing of this business you've already convicted me of—and I realize that there is no way in God's world I can prove it. Except for my word to the contrary there's nothing to show that I'm not the lowest form of crook—a card cheat." He looked about. Except in Mrs. Brinton's he read the same thing in every face but Sylvia's. She was looking down again. The others had convicted him.

Cold with anger, he continued evenly, his words edged with sarcasm. "For fear that my presence may prevent an entirely frank discussion, I'll say good night, dear friends. But don't think I'll not get to the bottom of it all before I'm through. I will." He walked out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

BEFORE the sound of the loud bang ceased echoing through the room, every one began to talk at once. "Now I understand why he was always so lucky. Wonder no one has ever caught him before," Lady Audley said to Mrs. Brinton and Julia Archdale.

"I don't for a minute think he did it," Bettina Brinton defended. "Bobby Austin couldn't do such a thing. We'll find out it's all a horrible mistake and then feel very much ashamed of ourselves."

"Ridiculous!" Lady Audley snapped. "I'm convinced he not only did it, but that he's been doing it for years. Too many drinks tonight made him clumsy."

Mrs. Brinton was still unconvinced. "But how could he? He wasn't even dealing."

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

"What was there to prevent him from taking it out of his pocket, or something of the sort? Nothing easier."

"How else can you explain it?" Julia Archdale inquired. "He was the only person benefited."

"I'll admit it looks bad, but still I don't believe it. I'm terribly sorry about the whole thing. Did you notice his expression? When I looked at him, I could have cried."

"So could I—when I thought of all the money he's won from me in the past," Lady Audley answered.

Edward Hutton, who had been talking to the other players, turned and spoke to the room in general. "I hardly know what to say about it all. There seems, unfortunately, to be but one answer. It's bad enough when a thing like this happens among men at the club, but in a party of this sort—" He hesitated. "Frankly, I don't know just how to deal with it."

Sylvia, who usually took the initiative in her own house, had remained silent through it all.

"There's the person I feel sorry for," Julia Archdale said in an aside to Mrs. Brinton. "After all these years, for him to do a thing of this sort—in her house, of all places. I never could understand what she saw in him, anyway. Well rid of him, I say."

"As he is a friend of mine, I prefer not to talk any more about it." Mrs. Brinton turned and walked away. As she did so, a servant came to her to say that she was wanted at the telephone.

Hurrying down the hall, she wondered uneasily who could be calling her at this hour of the night. Evidently it was important. In a few minutes she returned and went straight to Lady Sylvia. "I'm awfully sorry, but I'm going to have to ask you to send me to the station early tomorrow morning. I must get up to London as soon as possible, and you know I've sent my car back to town."

"Why? What's wrong?" Sylvia questioned, in surprise.

"I've just talked over the telephone with my husband's agent in London. He's been trying to get me since early in the afternoon. My boy has had a terrible accident, and his doctors in America have cabled for me to come at once. Everything is already arranged for me to sail on the *Olympic* from Southampton tomorrow afternoon."

"Oh, I am so sorry! Don't think of going up by train. I'll send you up in one of the cars."

"No, no, don't do that. You'll need them all to carry your party to the races. My agent told me that there is a train up from Slough at eight-thirty. If you could send me over to that?"

"Of course I can. I do hope the accident won't prove as serious as you fear."

"Thanks. And now I am going to say good night and good-by."

Her farewells said to the rest of the party, Bettina Brinton went to her room. Her mind intent on her own trouble, the events of the night which were to engross the party downstairs for another hour were for the time completely forgotten. She tried to sleep but thoughts of her son's accident prevented. How seriously was he hurt? A thousand forebodings filled the hours until daylight came.

But she was not the only person for whom the night was a sleepless one. Sylvia also watched the hands of the clock make their slow circuit, marking off the endless hours. For an hour, she had masked her feelings behind an expression of bewilderment and reluctant belief. Now she must be alone.

WHEN the door closed behind her maid, Sylvia sat by the open window and looked out on the shadowy park. Everything had worked out just as she had planned—even better. She had never counted on being able to put the ace, which every night she had brought with her to the table, into the discards at quite such a spectacular and damning time. Luck had been with her. And no one suspected—not even Bobby himself. "What did he think?" she wondered. "Fool! He didn't think anything. He could no more suspect me than do himself the thing he was accused of."

Accused of! Branded with! That was it. The mark was on him now for all the world to see. Kathleen Lawrence had sent him back to her. Now she would return him. Card-sharp and cocotte—wonderful combination!

At the thought of Kathleen Lawrence, the rage which she had felt on that day when Bobby came back to London became

alive again, and with it her desire to hurt; to hurt even more than she had done already.

She went over to her desk and, taking a sheet of paper, wrote a few lines. Folding it, she put it into an envelope, and tiptoeing down the darkened hall, she slipped it through the lighted crack which showed beneath his door, then hurried back to her room, closing her door softly behind her.

She returned to her seat by the window. "It's finished—I'm sorry." She repeated his remembered words aloud to the dark and the night sounds outside. "Yes. . . . Now it is finished."

She looked about the room. On her desk was a large framed picture of Bobby—an enlargement of one she had snapped one afternoon after tennis at Brierly. His hair was tousled, his shirt open at the neck. He was laughing at something, and his happy eyes looked out from the picture directly into hers.

She remembered the day perfectly. It was a Sunday afternoon—the Sunday of his second week-end at Brierly. What an innocent boy he had been then—an infant full of funny ideas and ideals, almost quixotic! Now he was Bobby Austin, card cheat.

She moved uneasily in her chair, then for a second time went over to the desk and laid the picture face down. But this did not help. Mentally she was still looking into the pictured eyes. He had loved her then with all the passion which she had awakened in him. And she had been proud of him, this lover whom other women wanted but could not win away from her.

Again she went over to the desk. With fingers not quite steady, she unhooked the back of the frame and took out the picture. For a long minute she held it in her hand, looking at it. Slowly, deliberately, she tore it in two, then into tiny bits which fell unheeded to the floor. Her arms dropped to her sides. She stood quite still, and drew a deep breath, abruptly broken by the sob which came into her throat. Blindly she walked to the bed and threw herself across it, stifling the sob in the pillows which she stained with her paint-dirtied tears.

While Sylvia lay unsleeping in her room, Bobby sat in his, living through the blackest hours of his life.

When the rage which had possessed him cooled, he began to take stock of his position. He had confidently asserted that he intended to get to the bottom of the affair, but the conviction that this was impossible slowly forced itself upon him. Try as he might, he could not frame an explanation which convinced even himself.

That the card had somehow become accidentally mixed with the pack was the only solution which he could imagine. That it had remained there undiscovered all evening until it appeared in his hand was one of the inexplicable tricks of fate. But who would believe this? Every fact pointed the other way. It was his word against a mountain of damning evidence—and he knew that there was no way under heaven to corroborate his denial. There was no way of escaping it—the world would believe him guilty.

His friends, his real ones, of course would take his word. The Embassy people, his intimates, Sylvia, they would believe in his innocence. He wondered why she had said nothing downstairs—stunned by the suddenness of it all, perhaps.

HIS eyes fell on a white envelope which unnoticed had been slipped under his door while he sat immersed in his thoughts. He went over and picked it up. His name, in Sylvia's handwriting, was scrawled across it. He almost smiled. Dear Sylvia—it was like her not to wait until morning to let him know that she believed in him. It might be even that she had some solution to suggest. Eagerly he tore open the envelope and scanned the writing within.

> Under the circumstances, I think you will agree that you had better go. I have ordered a car to be ready to take you to the early train. Bobby, Bobby, how could you do it? Why didn't you come to me? I would have helped you out—now it is too late. SYLVIA.

Bobby reread it, unbelieving. . . . The crudeness of it—and the hardness! She had condemned him with the others. He crumpled the note into a tight ball. So this was what he had to expect!

His other friends—would they be so quick to accept his guilt? Of course not. Scott and the other men at the Embassy would believe. . . . Or would they? All through the night he sat thinking, trying

to persuade himself that with daylight things would appear less hopeless.

At seven, he changed his evening clothes, in which he had sat all night, and went downstairs. From the upstairs windows, two people watched Bobby's departure, Sylvia and Bettina Brinton. Neither had slept.

After the motor disappeared among the trees, Sylvia went back to her bed and at last fell asleep. Mrs. Brinton continued to pace her room—her nerves a wreck after a night of conjectured horrors. The packing finished, her maid went downstairs and brought up her breakfast, which Bettina left untouched. "Is everything ready?" she questioned, nervously walking from window to door, and back. Before the maid could reply, she added, "Julia, go and find me a pack of cards from somewhere. I'll go mad, doing nothing on the train. I can't stand much more of this. I'll go off my head. I couldn't read if I tried. Get me some cards and I'll play solitaire on the way to town." The maid left to fulfil her orders and in a few minutes returned with the cards. "Put them in my bag and see to it that I have it in the carriage with me on the way up. Ah, at last! There's the car."

In the train, it happened that the only other occupant of the compartment in which her maid put her was a man she had met early in the week at Ascot.

"This is a surprise," he said. "What can be taking you to London at this hour? I suppose you'll be rushing back, as I hope to do, in time for the first race."

"No," Mrs. Brinton replied. "I've just received a rather alarming cablegram from America, and am sailing from Southampton this afternoon."

"That's too bad; I trust it proves to be nothing serious."

At Paddington Station they said good-by and for the rest of the day Mrs. Brinton was so occupied with packing, tickets and the other details of a hurried departure that she had no time for thought of anything else. That afternoon, she went aboard ship at Southampton, and for the next four days lay in her berth as the ship groaned and pitched through a summer storm.

On the fifth day, a calm sea and a reassuring wireless from the doctors brought her on deck, where she lay in her chair in a sheltered corner, an unopened book in her lap.

"BETTINA BRINTON! What are you doing here?" Bettina looked up and Lawford Gordon, an American friend, smiled down at her. "I had no idea you were on the ship. Where have you been?"

"In my berth, horribly ill," she answered him, smiling.

In answer to his questions, she told him of her son's accident and her hurried departure from England. They chatted for some time and finally Gordon suggested that they play cards to hurry up the tea hour.

"I'll go to the smoking-room and get some cards. We can play here on deck. There's no wind."

"No, don't do that," she said, sitting up. "I think there's a pack in my bag there in that chair by you. If you will give it to me—I can't reach it without getting up—I'll look."

Gordon picked up the black silk bag, modishly large and with B. B. initialed in brilliants, and gave it to her.

"Now let me see," she continued, fumbling among the odds and ends inside. "There was a pack that I took away from Sylvia Hutton's the morning I left her house at Ascot. Ah, here it is!"

Gordon took the pasteboard box which she held out to him, opened and slipped out a pack of red-backed cards. "What shall we play? Double dummy?"

"No," Bettina answered, settling herself again in her chair and pulling the rug about her. "Suppose we play piquet. It's a much better game for two, don't you think?"

"Yes, I suppose it is," he agreed, and began to sort the cards. "You take out everything up to the sevens, don't you? I never can remember."

"That's right," Bettina nodded, watching him idly as he quickly ran through the pack.

"Hello! I'll have to go and get some cards after all. These are no good," Lawford said, getting up from his chair.

"Why? What's wrong with them?"

"The ace of spades is missing."

Card cheat! Innocent, Bob wakes up to his true friends. Read the conclusion of "One-Way Street"—in June EVERYBODY'S, out May 15.

By the Author of "The Emperor's Old Clothes"

Mr. Collin's Adventures

The Eccentricities of a Mad Grand Duke Put Collin in the Way of Excitement and an Advantageous Financial Transaction

By Frank Heller

III. Becoming a Landlord

"GOOD Lord, how monotonous is life!" sighed Mr. Philip Collin one day in January, 1909, as he sat lost in the commodious depths of an armchair, in the lounge of the Atlantic Hotel in Hamburg. Mr. Collin, who was visiting the town for business purposes, had just finished a late lunch at Pfordte. A bright fire was burning in the open grate: the smoke of a cigar which he held between two fingers curled in blue spirals above his head, and round him floated the melodious strains of an invisible orchestra.

But his inner man, despite this outward show of relaxation, was filled with a sense of spleen, caused either by the opulent lunch or by his successes in business. Many small successes, says Hafiz, weaken the disposition and produce weariness of the spirit. The philosopher Volpitius, commenting upon these words, adds that a threatening danger, a powerful exertion or a phenomenal adventure is needed to counteract such a state of mind.

Deeply depressed, as he was condemned to spend at least six hours more amid this misery, Mr. Collin began to rummage in a pile of newspapers which lay at his side and tried to divert himself by looking through them. But in vain. One paragraph after another only elicited a sneering grumble: Parliament has not— Let it! A new steamer has been launched by the Vulcan Wharves— What the devil do I care? Bülow has made a speech— To hell with all official speeches! Grand Duke Peter Nikolaievich has fallen into disgrace: thus the rumor in St. Petersburg. Damned smart, if it's the result of kicking over the traces! thought Philip Collin. Why can't he come here and have an extra fling?

B'r-r-r! Life is far too dreary and monotonous.

He dropped the paper on his knees, stared pessimistically at the advertisements on the last page, "Theaters and Entertainments," and skimmed lazily through the programs: they all seemed as dull as ditchwater.

"I know what's amiss: things are too comfortable. If I were stranded here, penniless and forced to pull through, relying solely on my wits and my energy, it would be another story altogether. A new idea— that would be a safety valve!

Just as he was thinking this, his glance fell on an advertisement near his left thumb. It began with the word "Discretion," and in the expectation that it concerned a private money-lender, he read it through absent-mindedly, hoping to find an opportunity to express his dissatisfaction with life. But it proved to be something quite different.

Discretion. Owner of a new Night Club is looking for Ladies and Gentlemen (real gentlemen) to lend the premises greater elegance and to contribute to the entertainment. (On the first evenings refreshments free of charge—eventually also a fee.) Only distinguished guests need apply. Adr. Rudolf Moose.

Suddenly seized with a premonition of the possibilities opened up before him, Mr. Collin rose from his chair with a new light in his eyes. For a few seconds he stared thoughtfully at the river Alster, then he rapped on the table and paid his bill.

"Can you imagine what this is?" Philip asked the waiter, handing him the paper.

The latter read the paragraph and reflected for an instant. "That is probably Le Papillon de Nuit, the new night restaurant near the Central Railway Station. I hear it is tiptop. Shall I telephone and reserve a table for M. le Baron?"

"Thanks," responded Philip, adding imprudently: "I'll go there myself, for this advertisement interests me."

On reaching the offices of Rudolf Moose, Philip had been sent to Director Breitman of the Papillon de Nuit, who engaged him at once, and provided him with a blue entry card. Eleven o'clock found him at his post, ready to begin on his evening's work.

In five minutes Philip was abundantly convinced that he had never seen anything like it before—though Paris, Budapest and the Riviera held no secrets for him.

The restaurant had been built in two sections, the one opening out of the other. The first presented nothing unusual in its appearance and was adorned on conventional lines by masses of palms: the second, however, was curiously decorated. In Moorish style, with slender columns and a mosaic floor, it was shaped like a horseshoe: lamps in beaten metal projected from the walls: swelling carpets covered the floor, leaving a circular space for the mosaic, and chairs were everywhere replaced by divans. In the background an orchestra of red-coated Hungarians was fiddling and Philip nodded to their conductor, whom he knew from the "Rat Mort"; at several tables, wrapped in thin veils which allowed glimpses of brown skin, sat Nubian women (guaranteed genuine) with curious musical instruments. Sometimes when the Tziganes stopped playing, they twanged their instruments and arose in a weird and breathless dance.

Philip was not quite sure of his part, but played it as to the manner born. He danced with the women who were there, drank champagne and tried to add to the luster of the restaurant by all the means at his disposal. Toward midnight the guests from the theaters and music halls began to trickle in, an elegant, though not very numerous, public; and Philip wondered how such an enterprise could possibly flourish.

IN SPITE of his fears, by one o'clock the place was filled with an impeccable public, gentlemen in evening dress and patent-leather shoes, such as himself; women in elegant, perhaps a trifle too elegant, raiment. Champagne flowed at all the tables and the majority were having supper at the exorbitant prices charged in this haunt of pleasure. The specifically gay atmosphere of the night club, the absence of which can transform the latter into the semblance of a funeral vault, had set in. Philip was about to order a second Mumm when his attention was attracted by a scene at the entrance.

He saw there, engaged in a violent altercation with the negro porter, a person whose exterior most aptly recalled a shoemaker in his Sunday best. His slouching figure was enveloped in a badly fitting gray suit with wide trousers, deeply creased about the knees. The shoes of a yellowish brown, which apparently were not a right fit, bore signs proving that no cab had been requisitioned to bring him thither. A round bowler elegantly pushed back at the nape of his neck made a pleasant contrast to his hatchet face with the protruding cheekbones. The nose was the most prominent feature, its dimensions and color a striking proof that its owner was no teetotaler. A black mustache drooped over the mouth and a cigarette protruded from under it. But the most wonderful feature in the whole apparition was the man's tie, which combined the color of a burning brick wall with the size of a small German principality.

"Yes—a beer!" Philip heard him call out in a voice that sounded half irritated, half pathetic. "Don't you hear, you black fiend? I only want a beer!"

The negro's answer was inaudible but it was easy to gather from his gestures that he had no intention of complying with this demand. He was already about to remove the guest by forcible means, when the manager hastened forward and whispered a few words to him. As if by magic the negro's arms sank helpless to his sides: the shoemaker straightened himself with relief and held out his hand to his rescuer. The

latter apparently put a question to him, for he began to inspect the restaurant, where every one had followed the proceedings, astounded. At last he lifted a long yellow forefinger and pointed to Philip's table. To his inexpressible amazement, Philip saw the manager bow ceremoniously and escort the man in gray across the mosaic floor. When they had reached Philip's table, which was almost the only one at which there was any room, the manager came to a halt, while his protégé carefully dusted a divan and sat down on its extreme edge. The manager asked humbly what he might order.

"Pilsener."

"This is most extraordinary," thought Philip. "Am I drunk or dreaming? Is it a hoax on the part of the management, or does he represent the latest thing in American millionaires!"

He surreptitiously examined the man in gray.

At first he had occupied one inch of the divan, but by degrees he worked himself on to it and now was leaning against the back. When he had successfully achieved this, he spat out his cigarette end, went through his pockets and at last fished out a newspaper from which he extracted a half-smoked cigar. He lit it with a reeking lucifer match, which he rubbed against his trousers, and thereupon began to survey those present. It was easy to see that they did not meet with his approval, for he snorted, took out a blue-red handkerchief, the size of a small sheet, and blew his nose with ostentatious contempt. At this very moment the beer arrived.

He hastened to bury his face in the mug, but it reappeared as the waiter was about to withdraw.

"Hi, you!" he shouted. "You want to be paid, don't you?" He was obviously accustomed to visit places where credit was not granted promiscuously.

"How much is it?" he inquired resolutely.

"Twenty marks, your honor." To Philip's amazement the man in gray extracted a shining gold piece from his pocket and, adding to it a nickel of ten pfennigs, handed the whole to the waiter with the words "For your trouble" spoken as if he wished to cut short any expressions of gratitude. The waiter disappeared with a bow, and Philip stared bewildered at his neighbor. Twenty marks for a glass of beer! Even here it was quite an exorbitant little price. The man, who had noticed Philip's glances, turned with a gleam in his eyes, and said:

"Your health, sir!"

"Your health," answered Philip, while he closely surveyed the man in gray. His eyes were intelligent and there was a light in them which pleased Philip. A shoemaker! Ridiculous. Was he an actor who was diverting himself by mystifying the public? His features appeared familiar to Philip, as if he had seen his photograph somewhere; but his brain refused to give him a name. After they had put down their glasses Philip leaned forward, remarking:

"I imagine that we are colleagues?"

"I don't understand the gentleman."

"Is that so? I only meant that I have been engaged by the manager to sit here."

"WHAT'S the gentleman saying? No, I am shoemaker Wörtz from Altona and want to have a little fling, my good sir."

"Is that possible, Herr Wörtz? So late in the day and out to have a good time. Well, don't worry. I shan't say a word about this to Frau Wörtz, should we meet."

Herr Wörtz's face was convulsed by a grin, as gigantic as his mustache.

"Your health, my good sir!" he shouted. "The gentleman is a jolly rogue. Will you have a beer?"

"Thank you, Herr Wörtz," Philip answered sedately. "I like beer."

Herr Wörtz rapped on the table and ordered two more glasses of beer in the same overbearing manner, obviously quite resolved to let every one in the place know that this shoemaker Wörtz had every intention of enjoying himself and of letting the consequences go hang. The beer came at once and forty marks left the pocket of Herr Wörtz in company with twenty pfennigs, which he asked the attendants to dispose of as they thought fit. Then he turned to Philip and said:

"And all the gentleman has to do to earn his keep is to sit on his—er—well, sit still?"

"Yes, that is about it, but I must also dance."

"Now that is fine," added Herr Wörtz with admiration, "really fine. I sit on the shoemaker's bench and must plague myself all day. That's another story, my dear sir."

An hour passed, while Philip, who was growing more and more interested in his

eccentric neighbor, discussed the problems of life, partly from the point of view of a shoemaker and partly from that of a night bird. Finally Herr Wörtz remarked with a yawn:

"Hang it all! What a boring hole, my dear sir! Has the gentleman not sat enough for one night? Can we not go somewhere else and have real fun?"

"Certainly," said Philip, "though I am not really at liberty to go before three A.M."

Herr Wörtz rapped and demanded his bill. He had forgotten to pay for some time.

"Eight beers, 160 marks," said the waiter.

Herr Wörtz took an extremely worn pocketbook from his inner pocket and counted 160 marks on the table plus 80 pfennigs as a tip.

"Confound it!" thought Philip. "If Herr Wörtz has not yet quenched his thirst he will be ruined within an hour. By the way, shoemaking seems a profitable business. Twenty marks a pint—one may call this a princely sum, even if a tip of ten pfennigs is not exactly a princely—" Before he could trace his thought to a logical conclusion, he started with a long-drawn whistle. Ha! Now at last he knew! At last! He knew why the face of Herr Wörtz had seemed familiar to him, what photograph he had seen and under what heading. Princely tip! Of course! He distinctly visualized a number of the *Woche* which for a wonder had not contained the portrait of the Kaiser, but instead, that of his present table companion. Beneath it, though, was written not "Herr Wörtz" from Altona, but "Peter Nikolaievitch, Grand Duke of Russia." The mad Grand Duke! The whole of Europe had heard about the eccentricities of the Grand Duke Peter as it had also heard about his riches.

He was the possessor of unlimited landed property and mines in Russia and from his father he had inherited whole districts in London. But it was said that he detested that city, while he loved Berlin; and Hamburg was his Mecca. Each year he used to visit it on his way to his august relatives in Copenhagen and as often as occasion offered. At court he was really under a cloud and quite lately the papers had reported that he had been banished to Ekaterinoslav. It looked as if he had escaped from there and was enjoying a forbidden holiday in Hamburg. The man who was in the first place responsible for the security of the Grand Duke was probably in no enviable position, for he must have expected to be presented with a silken cord at any moment. His task was the more difficult because the Grand Duke was a marvelous actor and reputed to know the criminal quarters of Berlin and Hamburg at least as well as the police knew them. The manager of the Papillon de Nuit evidently recognized his Highness from former escapades.

While Philip hastily tabulated these memories, he and Herr Wörtz had already left the night club, after a short interview with the manager who declared that Philip would lose his job if he went before three. With regard to this, Herr Wörtz gave Philip a bit of advice, which was well meant but quite unprintable, after which he called for a cab. When the Jehu saw the curious couple, Philip in evening dress and patent shoes, and Herr Wörtz in his strange suit, he evidently took the latter for a detective who had arrested Philip, for he growled:

"Aha! We're for the lock-up, are we? Jump in. One doesn't want to lose one's reputation carting about such baggage."

Herr Wörtz did not keep him waiting for a rejoinder:

"Baggage!" he shouted. "So we are baggage. Of all the thick-skulled brutes of Hamburg coachmen—"

In his best Hamburg dialect, Herr Wörtz followed this up with a description of the cabby, listened to with interest by his colleague. After he had prophesied a bad ending for the cabby on account of the same qualities which had ruined Gustavus Adolphus—stupidity and pig-headedness—he ordered him to drive to Schiemann's beer restaurant. The coachman refused flatly and emphatically.

"Then take us as far as the Brunnergasse, and we will walk the rest of the way."

TEN minutes later the cab stopped at the entrance to a dark and sinister-looking little street, which was dimly lighted by yellow lamps and from which came the sound of drunken yelling. Herr Wörtz put his arm through Philip's and, feeling like another Dyafar at the side of the Caliph bent on adventure in this modern Bagdad, Mr. Collin turned with his companion into the slum. At the first lamp post Herr

Wörtz stopped and, examining Philip very critically, he said: "The gentleman can't go in like this. They have no use for nuts here."

So, choosing a deserted staircase as their dressing-room, in a few minutes Herr Wörtz with a few deft touches, the help of some tobacco juice from his dreadful weed and a little mud, had transformed Philip Collin, D.C.L., into the finest specimen of a loafer from the docks. Philip had donned Herr Wörtz's loud-checked ulster, which reached down to his ankles, also his bowler; while the latter adopted Philip's top hat after it had been suitably battered. They then continued on their way until Herr Wörtz stopped in a narrow alley only about two yards wide, in front of a red brick building with lighted windows. Before the door could slam to Herr Wörtz stood in it, grasping Philip by the hand.

"Good evening," Philip heard him whisper. "Wörtz, I tell you . . . Wörtz! No swindle!" A coin clinked softly and Philip felt himself drawn into the dark staircase by Herr Wörtz.

The next instant his companion pushed him into a room, the atmosphere and heat of which choked him as if he were breathing in whiffs from Vesuvius. His eyes began to water and it was some minutes before he could get his breath, or feel sufficiently recovered to have a look at his surroundings.

It was a fairly large room furnished with oak tables and long benches; crudely tinted advertisements were dimly discernible on the walls, and six gas lamps wheezed asthmatically in the fearful atmosphere. The smoke was so dense that it floated in long streamers behind the waiters, who ran to and fro in the room. Turning his attention from the men, mostly seamen, who were crowding the room, Philip perceived on his right a bar and a man working behind it.

Philip had rarely seen any one like him: as hefty as a heavyweight, he had a shining bald pate which shone blood-red under the gas flaming above the counter; a mustache like that of a walrus drooped over his mouth, which ceaselessly gasped for air, and his blue eyes were imbedded in bolsters of fat. His arms bared to the elbow and his huge red and swollen paws were in constant motion.

Herr Wörtz, who had been watching Philip's astonishment with a grin, pulled him along to the bar, where they were greeted with a shrill whistle by the bloated-looking individual.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Wörtz! Damned long time since you were here last. Been traveling?" he inquired with a bow half servile, half impudent. "And this gentleman? He is a fresher, that's easy to twig. What can I give such a fine gentleman? Something strong, eh?"

"Gin, Schiemann," said Herr Wörtz. "But the right stuff!"

So that was Schiemann!

"Well, and what does the gentleman say to Schiemann's beer garden?" queried Herr Wörtz. "That it is a bit different from your Papillon, eh? Your health, my good sir!"

PHILIP had a sip at his bluish white gin, which burnt his throat more fiercely than fire could have done, and made him cough so violently that both Herr Wörtz and Schiemann were almost convulsed with laughter.

Herr Wörtz asked, as he tossed down with unconcern a glass of the fiendish brew, "Does the gentleman find it too stuffy here?" He leaned toward him and whispered:

"Shall we go into the other room? What? Will you have a game?"

"A game?" Philip echoed, puzzled.

"Well, yes, roulette, by Jingo!"

"Roulette!" he said. "Dangerous pastime, Herr Wörtz, very dangerous!"

"Just you wait," Herr Wörtz replied. "Schiemann! Schiemann, just come here. Your health!"

The red-faced barkeeper took his glass of gin and threw its contents with incredible deftness into his gaping mouth, and seemed to drop the glass on the counter rather than put it down. "What's up?" he asked.

"Just listen a minute, Schiemann," said Wörtz, pulling him by his shirt-sleeve.

They held a whispered consultation during which a golden coin quickly changed hands, whereupon the proprietor, bidding one of the waiters to attend to the guests, led Philip and shoemaker Wörtz through the saloon. Philip noticed at the other end an old man in a dress coat who was playing the fiddle accompanied by a pianola, and whose presence until then he had not perceived, because of the noise and smoke. Close to the

pianola there was a bolted door, which Schiemann opened. Behind it there yawned a dark corridor, and on crossing that they found themselves before another door which swung open in obedience to a number of Morse signals tapped out by Schiemann, who then pushed in Philip and Wörtz, and disappeared with a malignant grin.

"Now the gentleman is a member of Schiemann's Relief Fund," said Herr Wörtz. "The society holds its meetings here, but always by night, my good sir, for its members are rather shy."

Philip glanced about him. This room was larger than the public room; it boasted a carpet and some ventilation. But though the atmosphere seemed like Paradise after the beer-saloon, it was pervaded by a strong smell of alcohol and tobacco.

THE members of Schiemann's Relief Fund were gathered round a long gaming table; and in the background there was a bar where they were able to partake of refreshments. Many of the gamblers had glasses in their hands.

"Now the gentleman will see how furious they can get when any one else is winning," remarked Herr Wörtz. "Do you drink whisky? Well, then, fetch two half-pints at the bar, and meanwhile I will begin. Here's the cash."

Philip went to do his bidding, and while he was waiting to be served he scrutinized the gathering. It was evidently a picked assembly, for it consisted mostly of foreigners, sailors ranging from captains to seamen, who were unlikely to split on Schiemann, though he also noticed at the first glance that there were nevertheless some dubious elements among them. For a moment he felt rather uneasy, but the thought of Herr Wörtz's revolver and his friendship with Schiemann reassured him. He thereupon took his two glasses of whisky and tried to push his way back through the crowd. He found this rather more difficult than he had anticipated, for something seemed to have happened in the meantime; finally, amid the curses of the gamblers, he managed to get through to Herr Wörtz and to behold the cause of the commotion. Opposite to Herr Wörtz sat the croupier, a dried-up little creature as yellow as a Chink, with the black eyes of a reptile, and behind him stood a man who could be no other than Schiemann's brother. He had the same gigantic build, the same mustache, eyes, and enormous red and swollen hands. He was smartly dressed and wore a flower in his buttonhole. For the moment he, as well as the croupier, was the object of the wrath of Herr Wörtz, for although he had won, and had been handed his winnings by the croupier, the latter had smuggled in two faked gold pieces.

"I want honest money, you yellow-faced devil, you!" Herr Wörtz shouted repeatedly. "We don't play with counters here."

Several of the gamesters laughed at him, but the majority cursed because he was holding up the game. At last Wörtz was appeased and the croupier was just going to set the ball rolling when Herr Wörtz stopped him by pointing a finger at Schiemann's brother and inquiring:

"Schiemann, what is the maximum?"

The bloated, red-faced manager looked at him sneeringly and replied in a superior manner:

"Whatever you care to punt."

"Five hundred marks per number?"

Schiemann hesitated for a moment and casting a glance at the croupier, who responded with a scarcely perceptible nod, he answered:

"Just as you like."

"Fine!" said Herr Wörtz. "Go ahead."

By studying the table during this conversation Philip had discovered that the game in progress was not roulette, but boule, a similar game, with only nine holes instead of the thirty-six in roulette. The hollow in which the ball ran was placed in the center of the table, and hardly had the croupier sent the ball spinning before Herr Wörtz, who was holding Philip's battered hat in his hand, took some money out of it and placed it unhesitatingly on number eight.

"How can you play for such high stakes?" asked Philip. "You may be sure that they have their dodges here."

"That's precisely what I am out to prove," whispered back Herr Wörtz. "If I am able to do this they'll lynch Schiemann, and that's always a pretty sight. Your health!"

He swallowed half of the infernal black-brown whisky in his glass without turning a hair; at the same moment the ball began to slow down and a few seconds later the

croupier proclaimed, "Three!" Three! Herr Wörtz had lost! With a brazen grin the croupier raked in his gold, while Schiemann expressed his satisfaction by spitting over his shoulder. Herr Wörtz, however, appeared the most unconcerned of all, for amid the laughter of the other gamblers he staked another five hundred marks on number eight. The croupier, who had paid out a few paltry winnings, again sped the ball on its course. Without taking his eyes off it, Herr Wörtz went on sipping his whisky, and he had almost finished when the croupier announced his second loss. Number seven had come out. Herr Wörtz's five hundred marks were raked in and Schiemann's brother inquired impudently: "Any more stakes?"

"Keep cool, my dear sir," said Herr Wörtz, taking a last sip at his glass, and handing it to Philip he pulled out a five-hundred-mark bank note from his pocket, and placed it carelessly on number eight. For the third time the ball whizzed off, while the other players, who had punted quickly, watched Herr Wörtz in breathless expectation. One thousand five hundred marks—a fabulous sum for this gaming den! Philip noticed the sharp glances of various shady individuals focused on himself and his companion.

In the meantime the ball had been spinning more and more slowly and the gamblers were excitedly discussing where it was going to stop. There it goes—another round—oh, never! Five is coming—no, it passes—well, then six. Damnation! Eight—he's won this time. The ball seems to roll between the holes, zigzags past five, six, wabbles on the edge of seven, and finally drops with a heavy thud into number eight. There, as if by a miracle, it seems to gather fresh impetus, it rises from the hole and rolls onward past number nine, and into number one, where it settles for good. At the same moment, as Philip was about to express his sympathy to Wörtz, the latter's arm swung backward, his hand dived into his pocket and out came a revolver which he pointed across the table.

"HANDS up, Schiemann, and you, you blasted Chink!" yelled Herr Wörtz. "Keep still or I shoot! Silence, please, gentlemen! Whoever wants to may come along and see for himself what the bottom of the holes at Schiemann's looks like. If you find they're all right, you can string me up on the nearest lamp post."

A veritable pandemonium broke out round Philip and the intrepid shoemaker. The croupier and Schiemann appeared to be paralyzed with fear by the mere sight of the revolver, but several doubtful customers who were outside its range tried to press forward in order to attack Herr Wörtz from behind. Philip had to use his fists to keep them off until quiet could be partially restored, and he succeeded in fixing on three men—to judge by their appearance captains in the German mercantile navy—to carry out the investigation demanded by Herr Wörtz.

"A knife, take a pen-knife," he called out to them. "I'll bet anything you like that there is a rubber thread, perhaps even a spring."

The three men did as they were told and the rest of the gamblers strained their necks to see the result. Suddenly there arose a hurricane of polyglot curses and exclamations, for across the blade of the knife, with which one of Philip's helpers had been investigating the bottom of the hole of number eight, there appeared a thin black rubber string, and a rapid examination showed that all the other holes were provided with similar contrivances. Whenever the sums staked were too high for Schiemann, a slight jerk and the ball rolled past the unpropitious hole.

What followed this discovery passed like a dream over Philip's head. There was the report of a shot—probably fired involuntarily from Herr Wörtz's six-barrel gun; one of the gas lamps was smashed to atoms and the gas began to escape from the pipe with a hissing sound.

Suddenly Philip felt himself tightly gripped by the arm and pulled out through the door with lightning speed. The man who had been standing on guard there had disappeared.

"Quick, quick as the deuce!" Wörtz whispered into his ear. They shot through a door without a handle and up a narrow, stinking alley. Still running, they turned one corner after another, until they came to a broader street where, panting for breath, they came to a halt.

"You were a brick just now," gasped Herr Wörtz. "I was done for if you hadn't come to the rescue."

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

Philip nodded mutely, and they sprinted onward. At last they landed in a dark street, the name of which Philip only learned later; it was called Turkey Street. "What," he was thinking, "will be the next act in this adventure from the Arabian Nights?"

The Grand Duke had swung round to listen for sounds of pursuit, but nothing could be heard, so he extracted from an inside pocket a fair-sized bottle and regaled himself with a good long pull from it. He then invited Philip to share his brandy, but the latter smilingly refused with a shake of his head, for he could still feel the sting of Schiemann's devilish concoction. He inquired whether they had not better be moving on.

"Just wait a moment; I must arrange my socks," said Herr Wörtz.

They had come down during the flight, and he placed one foot on the curbstone and began to pull them up. Much to his amazement Philip noticed that Wörtz wore no pants, and full of admiration for disguise thus carried out in every detail, he strolled down the street a few yards ahead. Then, turning round to see whether the shoemaker was ready, he perceived him stretched out on the pavement and apparently lifeless.

Philip stood stock-still for a few moments, paralyzed with consternation. He finally pulled himself together and hastened to the side of his prostrated companion. Wörtz had fallen down slant-wise, headforemost, and this had happened with such suddenness that he had not even had time to break his fall with his arm, which lay helplessly doubled up under him. Philip propped up the limp figure against the wall of the house. It looked strangely grotesque with its head lolling downward, and saliva dripping from its mouth on to the red tie. He tore open the collar and was just going to try to bring him round when he chanced to look up. What he did next was to thrust his hand in a flash into Wörtz's hip pocket and to pull out his revolver. For slinking cautiously along the front of the houses came two suspicious-looking individuals whom he recognized at once as having been at Schiemann's. There was a significant grin on their faces and in their hands they held boomerangs of no lesser significance. So that was the key to the mystery! He made a hasty examination of Herr Wörtz's temple under the tousled black hair—there it was, a blue mark of a thumb's length left by a leaden knób—before he lifted the revolver and made a rush on the on-coming apaches.

HIS fight with the apaches was of short duration. As soon as they saw him hurling himself in their direction instead of fleeing, they halted, apparently perplexed; the next moment Philip's revolver barked—afterward he was unable to tell whether he fired that shot intentionally or not—and one of the two gentlemen caught at his left shoulder with a howl of pain. A second after they turned tail and darted along the alley, whereupon he returned to Herr Wörtz, who was still sitting propped up against the house and still dribbling on to his tie.

What was he to do next? In spite of the report of his shot there was no sign of life in the street; it seemed absolutely deserted. He was unable to drag away Herr Wörtz single-handed and something had to be done. The best plan surely was to find a cab to take the adventurous shoemaker to a hotel. If he was not mistaken, somewhere in the vicinity lay the Goose Market, and there surely he would find what he wanted.

After he had relieved Herr Wörtz of his pocketbook, for fear the apaches might come back, Philip commended him to the protection of all the Russian saints and wended his way through the streets in the solitude of early morning. Over the housetops lay a gleam of dawn. All at once Philip turned a corner, like any other of the dozen he had previously come to, and found himself in the Goose Market, which spread out before him, gray and bleak in the early morning light. There was a cab standing outside an inn, and with a sigh of relief Philip jumped into it, directing the driver to take him to Turkey Street; but it was not until he had paid part of his fare in advance that the cabby, who had been looking doubtfully at Philip's get-up, consented to drive off.

Philip sank back into the cushions, his mind full of the strange happenings of the night. Two minutes had scarcely passed when they began to lose their connection for him—his creative mind relaxed, his head dropped backward. Suddenly he started, roused from his slumbers by the cabby knocking smartly on the window with his whip and calling: "Turkey Street! That's

what you wanted, isn't it?" "Turkey Street; where on earth is Turkey Street?" thought Philip, still half asleep. "Oh, yes, by Jove!" It suddenly dawned upon him, wasn't he to fetch Herr Wörtz from there? The answer to this question was vouchsafed to Philip in the most unexpected manner and from the most unexpected quarter—namely, by Herr Wörtz himself.

With trousers still turned up and exposing his hairy legs, hat pulled deep down over his eyes, tie fluttering wildly like a pennant from the back of his neck—Herr Wörtz, in the clutch of two stalwart German policemen, bent to and fro like a tree in a winter gale. Evidently the blow on his temple had not been too devastating, but it was quite obvious that when Herr Wörtz recovered his senses and found himself in the above company, his temper had turned sour. Although his outlook was impaired by the hat, his mouth was unobstructed and from it there presently issued a volley of invectives and curses such as Philip had never heard before.

His speech was cut short by one of the policemen, who applied his huge hand to his mouth. "Fetch the van," Philip heard him call after his colleague, who was making off at the double. Red in the face with suppressed wrath, Herr Wörtz tried unsuccessfully to impress on the policeman his opinion of the treatment meted out to persons under arrest, but all his efforts were doomed to failure. However, all at once the blow he had received and the alcohol he had imbibed began to take effect on him, and he sank limply on to the policeman's chest, so that when the van arrived he was peacefully slumbering in the arms of the enemy.

The possibility of interfering flashed through Philip's mind but he dismissed it after a look at his clothes, for he was hardly more respectable than Herr Wörtz. He therefore contented himself with yelling to the cabby to follow the van.

Half an hour later, after he had ascertained Herr Wörtz's new address—the Police Station on the Goose Market—Philip rang the bell at the Hotel Atlantic. Philip had to submit to a veritable cross-examination in the offices of the hotel before he was able to persuade the powers that he was the guest who lodged in room No. 127. As he was about to leave the office he caught sight of the visitors' list, on the bottom row of which he read: Casimir Vivitz, Chamberlain to his Imperial Highness Peter Nikolaievich, Ekaterinoslav." An idea swept through his brain and after finding out at what hour Mr. Vivitz was to be called in the morning, he asked to be called at the same time. He went to bed just as the clock was striking six. The first part in this adventure was over, but it looked as though the day that was dawning would see a continuation of it.

THE next morning at half-past nine, fresh from his bath and a shave, Philip sent up his card to Chamberlain Vivitz. After a few minutes he received information that his Excellency was just having breakfast at Pfordte and did not wish to be disturbed.

Philip wrote on a second card, "Is your Excellency interested in your august employer?" and sent it across. Half a minute afterward, Chamberlain Vivitz asked for the honor of Professor Pelotard's company. Following on the steps of the waiter, Philip entered the restaurant, hastily sketching a short plan of action. What was the value of his communications? He was sure that he held the trumps in his hand, but what would they fetch? Before he had made up his mind about this, he was confronted by a clean-shaven elderly Russian with a champagne-yellow complexion and thick eyebrows, which were perpetually moving.

"Professor Pelotard?"

"At your service, Chamberlain."

"Pray be seated."

They took their places. The waiter began noiselessly to lay the table.

"So you have news of my august master?" Chamberlain Vivitz at once began his onslaught.

"Perhaps," Philip answered cautiously.

"So then you are not sure of your facts?"

"Perfectly—it remains to be seen whether your Excellency is certain of your own."

"H'm! I understand—I gather that his Highness is in Hamburg?" ("He is not even sure of that," thought Philip.)

"I thought your Excellency knew as much," he said loudly. "Yes, his Highness is in Hamburg."

"Excellent," said the Chamberlain coldly.

"But your Excellency's first consideration should be to know when he goes," Philip continued with a smile.

"Once I am sure that his Highness is in Hamburg, I shall soon know how to find him," the Chamberlain answered still more coldly.

"Hamburg is large, Excellency."

"Hamburg is small, Professor. At least, that part in which I have to look for the Grand Duke."

Philip smiled gently. Chamberlain Vivitz was perhaps right. The part in which he had to seek the Grand Duke was certainly small.

In the meantime the waiter had brought in the breakfast dishes and retired at a sign from Vivitz.

"May I ask you to take a vodka with your meal, Professor? A la Russe?"

"Thanks, with pleasure," answered Philip. "Russian fashion or Swedish fashion."

"Oh! Do you know Sweden?"

"Yes, I lived there for a long while."

They drank each other's health and Philip resumed:

"Your vodka is excellent, your Excellency. Let us hope that you will soon drink it again in Russia."

"According to my calculations I shall do so the day after tomorrow."

"That should not be difficult," retorted Philip smilingly. "It only rests with yourself."

"You seem to believe it rests with you. Why not with the police?"

"The police can be of no assistance in this matter!"

"So the Grand Duke is dead?"

"On the contrary, the Grand Duke is alive."

"Then I am unable to understand why the police cannot help me."

"All the same, it is so. I shall even go a step further and assert that in this case the police would even hinder you."

"You are joking, Professor."

"I never joke on serious matters."

"So this is a serious matter?"

"For me, yes—and also for your Excellency."

"*Business*, Professor?"

"Business, Excellency."

"May I ask at what figure a proposition becomes 'business' for you?"

"At the fifth, Excellency."

"And you reckon in German currency?"

"I am a naturalized Englishman," said Philip, himself astonished at his sang-froid.

"So you imagine that I stand absolutely in need of your help?"

"No, Excellency, I know it."

Apparently ignoring Philip's reply, the Chamberlain rose. "Well, then, good-by, Professor. We may meet tonight. But now I must go. My time is valuable."

"I should like to draw your Excellency's attention to a single point."

"And that is?"

"That my time is still more valuable than that of your Excellency!"

"We shall discuss this tonight."

"Gladly, if your Excellency can still afford to do so."

The Chamberlain smiled, but whether he was satisfied or irritated it was difficult to determine. As he was on the point of going he turned round once more and said:

"By the by, where can I find you?"

"At five I play billiards in the saloon round the corner."

"Oh! You are a billiard player. Splendid! We can try a game. Do you play well, Professor?"

"So-so. And your Excellency?"

"Moderately."

The Chamberlain went and Philip dropped into a deep reverie while smoking his cigar. But his thoughts were very different from those he had had in the club armchair in the lounge. Life was full of interest once more: adventure was not yet extinct and his duel with Chamberlain Vivitz filled him with an unholy joy.

AT FIVE Philip was in the billiard saloon looking for a decent cue when the door opened and Chamberlain Vivitz entered. His complexion was even yellower than in the morning; there were two deep furrows under his eyes and the thick black brows were ominously drawn together. "He has not found him," thought Philip with inner jubilation, and bowed politely.

"I was beginning to fear that your Excellency would have no time," Philip added.

Without replying the Chamberlain chose his cue carefully and then turned to Philip:

"You play well, Professor?"

"As I have already said, quite decently."

"High?"

"Now and then."

"For five-figure stake?"

Philip started. A match for ten thousand. By Jove, some game! But of course,

that was only natural in the Arabian Nights.

"Five figures! Just as you like, your Excellency," he said. "But they must be English ones."

"All right, but the lowest."

"I don't mind so long as they are English. I, therefore, stake my knowledge of the Grand Duke's whereabouts and you—ten thousand pounds. If I win, I get ten thousand pounds and have no further obligations; if I lose, I at once inform you as to the whereabouts of his Highness."

The Chamberlain nodded indifferently and Philip asked: "Shall we play a hundred up?"

"Only fifty, if you don't mind."

"All right," said Philip with a sinking sensation in the pit of the stomach. Fifty up cannon play, when the stake is ten thousand pounds! One's hand would shake for less.

They tossed and Philip lost. He made the first cannon with a beautiful screw shot, found his balls in position, and went on. He scored ten, then twenty, went on to thirty and passed thirty-five. At last just as he was going further to increase his score he miscued and his ball hardly moved a quarter of an inch.

"PLEASE have another shot, Professor," said the Chamberlain courteously. "You play wonderfully."

"Thank you, but I never take an advantage. Besides, I am certainly going to win. I feel in good form today."

"I am pleased to hear it," said the Chamberlain, chalking his cue. "So much the greater will be my victory."

Thereupon Vivitz, whose turn it now was, began to play, while the marker, stiff with astonishment, watched them both. And he had every reason to be astonished, for if Philip had played well—apart from the last shot even quite well—the Chamberlain played like a Parisian professor of billiards. The heavy black eyebrows contracted until they resembled a thick bar, the yellow hands stretched nervously across the cloth and there followed a swift, strong shot. To judge by appearance it was as unpremeditated as possible, but the white ball skimmed away with mathematical precision, hit the other two balls and placed itself in position. Vivitz left ten, twenty and thirty behind him, while the voice of the marker became more and more reverent, forty, forty-one, forty-six, forty-eight, forty-nine. Mr. Vivitz straightened himself and while chalking his cue before trying to make his fiftieth cannon, turned to Philip and remarked:

"We have unfortunately forgotten to settle this beforehand. Do you permit running out with the first break?"

"Of course," said Philip with a bow.

The Chamberlain did not answer. After chalking the cue to his complete satisfaction, he gazed for a minute at the billiard cloth, wrinkled his eyebrows, and, quickly stooping, gave a rapid sharp shot and the ball, which had struck one of the other two, whirled back, rebounded in turn against each of the three cushions and hit the third ball with mathematical accuracy right in the middle.

"Fifty," whispered the marker.

The Chamberlain stood up. "You have lost, Professor," he said.

"With credit to yourself," remarked Philip. "You have deserved to win and according to our agreement I shall now give you Grand Duke Peter's address."

"And where," queried the Chamberlain, "could we find his Highness?"

"In the lock-up near the Goose Market," said Philip blandly.

For the first time the yellow countenance of Vivitz showed some sign of animation. "What do you mean?" he exclaimed loudly. "If this is a joke, Professor, I should like you to remember that it is a very unseemly one."

"I assure you," said Philip, "that it is the veriest truth. But I had better add that you must not inquire for his Highness Grand Duke Peter of Russia."

"For whom?" asked Vivitz menacingly.

"For shoemaker Wörtz from Altona, arrested on account of drunkenness, rowdy behavior, active resistance to the police, and foul-mouthed insults directed against the authorities," replied Philip with an involuntary grin.

Vivitz contemplated Philip thoughtfully for a few minutes.

"A prince of the blood—a Romanoff—in prison," he murmured. "If that is a joke, you will have to pay dearly for it, Professor."

"I cannot understand your astonishment, your Excellency," Philip retorted. "Considering the habits of his Highness, such a

contingency was sure to arise some day or other. The only thing which surprises me is that the police did not recognize his Highness after you reported his disappearance. But *après tout* he has played his rôle well. The policemen who arrested him swore that in the fourteen years they have served they have never heard such vile language!"

"In prison, in prison!" repeated Vivitz, still quite overcome by this unexpected blow. "Why did you not tell me this earlier? This may prove a very expensive business to you, my dear Professor!"

PHILIP felt a momentary qualm. Would the Russian police now be after him, as well as the Swedish and Danish? Pshaw! He consoled himself promptly. It wouldn't make much difference.

An hour later, Philip and the Chamberlain left the police station in company with a long-haired, wild-eyed gentleman in a gray suit. Philip had recounted the events of the night to the superintendent, the Chamberlain had presented the necessary credentials and sworn to the identity of the Grand Duke, whereupon they were permitted, none too graciously, to depart.

After the Grand Duke in a few breaths had inhaled the cool evening air, he at last found his voice—at the police station he had been as dumb as a fish—and said in raucous tones the one word: "Beer!"

They went into the nearest public house and standing at the bar his Highness refreshed himself *ad lib* with beer straight from the tap, while Philip and the Chamberlain gazed at him reverently. At last the Grand Duke pushed away the mug—his fifth—and said:

"Ah, I was already half dead from this confounded water diet!"

"Why did not your Highness make your identity known?" the Chamberlain ventured to protest.

"Do you imagine they would have believed me, Vivitz? Forgive me, but you are an ass! Besides, I thought that I should go free under my assumed name. Why did you take such a long time to find me?"

"Highness," Vivitz protested, "I hardly knew whether your Highness was in Germany, let alone Hamburg. I did all I possibly could. The harbor has been dragged, the morgue inspected, the lower inns in St. Pauli—"

"Vivitz, you are too flattering."

"And all other haunts which were to be taken into consideration," the Chamberlain continued imperturbably. "And meanwhile, all this time there was one who knew the whereabouts of your Highness," he said, pointing to Philip, who was beginning to feel a little uncomfortable.

The Grand Duke looked at him with a smile.

"Oh, that man! Yes. Good old sport! A crazy party, that, at Schiemann's—what? Where did we part company?"

"Very crazy," said Philip. "We parted in Turkey Street, where your Highness tried to pull up his socks. May I be permitted, by the way, to express my sincerest congratulations on your Highness's most excellent state of health."

"What d'you mean? I feel like the three men in the fiery furnace."

"I mean that your Highness is capable of going about in winter without pants. The police who arrested your Highness seemed greatly struck by this. But enough. When I saw your Highness knocked unconscious by the blow of the apache, I could think of nothing better than to fetch a cab to take your Highness home before daylight. But when I returned, your Highness had already recovered and was engaged in hurling at the heads of the police the finest collection of abusive epithets I have ever heard. At first I intended to rescue your Highness, but was prevented by my insufficient attire, which was quite suitable at Schiemann's but less satisfactory as far as the rest of Hamburg was concerned. I had therefore to be content with finding out where your Highness had been quartered. Apropos, here is your revolver, Highness, and the pocketbook, for I considered it best to take care of them pending further developments. One cartridge is missing, but I had to take a shot at one of the apaches."

"Death and the Devil!" said the Grand Duke, who had listened laughing and full of childish satisfaction to the recital of his prowess.

"But the rest of the tale is less amusing," added the Chamberlain. "At breakfast the Professor called on me and offered to disclose the address of your Highness for a sum of ten thousand pounds. Naturally I refused—"

"Vivitz, you are a miser. My morning thirst was quite worth that amount."

"—and took up my own investigations, as your Highness knows, without result. In the afternoon, I was ready to pay the stipulated sum—"

"And not a whit too soon. I should have been dead before the night if I had not got some beer!"

"Meanwhile we squared the matter with a game of billiards. I staked ten thousand pounds, the Professor—your Highness's address. I won."

"That was some game," remarked the Grand Duke. "Well, and what is it you want to do with me now, Vivitz?"

"I imagine your Highness was perhaps disposed to travel home—"

"To Ekaterinoslav? Never in this life. I would rather sit in the lock-up every night."

"To Petersburg, Highness. The Czar has rescinded his ukase. The news came three hours ago, after your Highness's—departure."

"And now the whole world knows and—"

"No one knows. Officially your Highness is away shooting. May I order tickets for tonight?"

"You may. But before that, I must settle my business with this gentleman."

"THAT'S right," remarked Vivitz. "He deserves a sound lesson. If he lived in Russia—"

"Vivitz, he is punished sufficiently; he lives in England," said the Grand Duke. Then, turning to Philip: "How are housing conditions in England?"

"So-so, your Highness; they vary."

"I mean your own?"

"Well—not so bad—but—can it be possible? Could I hope for the joy of welcoming your Highness in England?"

"I? Go to England? Are you mad?" exclaimed the Grand Duke with a shudder. "All the public houses there shut at midnight? So you are comfortably lodged? Does your house belong to you?"

"No, your Highness."

"That's a pity, but we're going to change that. Vivitz, haven't I got some property somewhere in England? What's the name? Chester—"

"Chesterfield Place, Highness."

"That's it, Chesterfield Place. Will you see to it that a deed of donation of Chesterfield Place is issued to this gentleman, Professor—"

"Pelotard, Highness. But—" stammered Philip.

"No 'but.' You live in England. I never come there, so this is as it should be. Besides, you saved my life a couple of times last night. Moreover, you have estimated my address at ten thousand pounds. I do not wish to prove less polite. Your new address, confound it all, will be a little more valuable than that."

Philip bowed, overwhelmed by this oriental lavishness.

Doubt never entered his heart for a moment. It somehow seemed natural, for is not everything possible in the Arabian Nights?

The Chamberlain, who, following the august example of his master, was now amiability personified, was dispatched to a lawyer, to settle the deed of gift. In the evening, the three gentlemen dined at Pfordte, the appearance of the Grand Duke causing a sensation, and toward ten o'clock Philip accompanied the other two to the station, where a carriage had been reserved for them.

On the platform, the Chamberlain handed to Philip a packet which he held unopened in his hand while he took leave.

"If by some future mishap I should be exiled to England," said the Grand Duke, "I shall know where to find you."

"Certainly, Highness. But, as you mention it, may I be pardoned if I ask where exactly Chesterfield Place lies?"

"I don't know; in London, I believe—or where, Vivitz?"

"Quite right, your Highness, in London."

Struck by a premonition, Philip tore open the document and skimmed it, while the Grand Duke and Vivitz got into the train.

"But," he exclaimed, "I know Chesterfield Place in London! It is not a house—it is a street. And they have forgotten to put in the number of the house."

The train was beginning to move out of the station. The Grand Duke put his head out of the window. For the last time Philip saw his ludicrous face in the light of the arc lamps as he heard him call out:

"You don't want a number! You get the whole street."

In his next adventure Mr. Collin puts his old enemy Detective Kenyon under arrest—in June EVERYBODY'S, out May 15.

A Day's Work

The Lonely Strangers in a Great City—if Only the Right Ones Could Be Brought Together

By Mary Henke

TO A traffic policeman, as to a poet, the world is a stage traversed by shifting actors. Officer Thomas Martin, to whom this changing drama was old and unstirring, as to a stage manager knowing its mechanism, seldom gave a thought to the individuality of the actors. Occasionally he moved from his aloof calm to send a low word of richly deserved profanity after the fashionable Mrs. Morrison, who always disregarded his traffic signals; or, as to-day, to pass a good-natured word with young Jack Clarke, who was rushing intently past with a squirming puppy under his arm.

"Well, that's some dog," said the policeman. "Let's see him."

Jack stopped, obviously unwilling. The puppy, clutched about his round stomach, waggled his paws and tried to lick the policeman's hand. Martin lifted him out of the boy's arms and patted the round white head. The dog wriggled ecstatically, charmed by the policeman's condescension.

Martin looked up suddenly and saw that a group of interested onlookers was gathering. He tumbled the dog back into the owner's arms.

"A dog'll hold up the traffic any day in the week," he grinned.

Young Jack Clarke, with a clear expression of relief, darted on across the street. As a single repressed desire is said by the new psychologists to work deadly havoc, so Jack's single-minded desire for a dog, repressed by unsympathetic parents, had led him—not exactly to steal the dog, but to pick him up from before the boarding-house that was obviously his home.

His geniality stirred by that brief moment with the affectionate white ball of a dog, Officer Martin regarded his actors that day with a warmer interest.

"Wonderful how many pretty girls there are in this town," he mused. Then his eyes dropped suddenly on a girl who was crossing the street alone; a girl slender and white-skinned, with shy blue eyes and curly gold-brown hair glinting under a cheap black hat. She swayed gracefully on her small feet like a flower blown in the wind. Her dress of dark blue silk molded a body like Psyche's. From her clothes, while they were not shabby, one had a quick impression of a brave struggle to make ends meet. There was about the girl, as she moved through the nervous rushing city crowd an air of detachment and dreamy reserve.

"Well," thought Officer Martin simply, "she looks like a flower, that girl!"

She disappeared in the crowd across the street, but she remained in the policeman's mind, a worrying thought.

"A girl like that—too delicate and pretty, here alone. Why do girls always want to come to the city?"

Before he had been able to put the swaying flower-girl from his mind he saw the man. He came striding across the street, laughing at some passing jest and showing his firm white teeth. Handsome, brown, virile, he showed by the manner of his dress and his breezy good-humored alertness his Western origin.

"Two of them," thought Martin suddenly. "He's a man like that girl, only big and hard where she's slim and dainty. The outdoors made that pair—they're just made for each other. And they'll probably never meet. What a place a city is!"

That night, resting at home in the ease of his stocking feet, he still pondered the

matter. "Those two sure ought to know each other. Well, well, it's too bad! I don't suppose I'll ever see either of them again."

But he did. The handsome young Westerner, crossing early in the morning when traffic was light, stopped by Martin.

"Nice day, officer," he said with a friendly grin. "Have a cigar."

The policeman accepted cordially. "You don't belong in this city," he said confidently. "Too brown."

A sober light came into the Westerner's dark eyes. "No, I don't belong, all right! Gosh, this is a lonesome place! You're the first person I've had a friendly word with, besides the hotel clerk, since I came. I've been looking forward to coming East—hadn't been in a city for two years. Hungry for society. Well, I'm *famished* now. Isn't there any way but the wrong way for a fellow to have a good time, here?"

"I expect you're a little impatient," soothed the traffic officer. "You'll find it friendlier after a few days. When you get desperate for somebody to talk to, why, you just come and pass a word with me."

The young man grinned expansively. "Thank you, officer. Is cheering up lonely souls a part of your day's work?"

"There are lots of things in my day's work," the officer replied. "Good luck!"

THAT afternoon he saw the girl again. She was going along with her head down and he thought there were tears in her eyes. When she neared him she halted uncertainly.

"Please, did you see a dog—a lost dog?"

"What kind of a dog?" asked Martin gravely.

"A puppy three weeks old. Fox terrier, white with black spots."

Martin nodded thoughtfully. "I think I did. I don't know where he is now, but I'll see if I can find out for you. Where do you live?"

She told him. Martin wrote the address carefully. "I'll come around and report to you this evening when I go off duty."

The girl protested that it was too much trouble, but he silenced her with a lofty wave of the hand. "It's all in my day's work," he said, quoting the Westerner.

He called that evening at the dowdy, food-odorous boarding-house. "Tell Miss Willsie Carter," he told the frightened maid, "I've come to report about the dog."

Willsie came downstairs wearing a plain little frock of white organdy. She gave her small hand to the policeman.

"You are very kind," she said. "Please sit down."

He sat down with a side-look of hesitation at the rickety, plush-covered chair.

"I just wanted to tell you," he began slowly, "that I haven't found your dog, but I've got a clue. I think a little boy stole him."

Willsie regarded him wistfully. "Was he a nice little boy?"

"Well, yes." The policeman considered a moment. "Ordinarily I suppose he's as nice as little boys ever are."

The girl sighed. "Then I suppose he'd better have it. They wouldn't let me keep him here. When I was gone the landlady put him outside. If he's got a good home—and some one to love him—it's just as well." The tears glittered in her blue eyes. "I felt bad—because he came from home. My aunt sent him."

"I thought you weren't from the city," Martin declared conversationally.

"Oh, no!" The denial was hurried. "I hate it here. It's so ugly—and lonesome. I used to live in a little town down South with my aunt. But she had very little money and I felt that I ought to make my living. I work in a mail-order house. It costs so much to live, I never seem to get ahead." She smiled uncertainly. "I think I miss my aunt's flowers more than anything. She had a real old-fashioned garden."

"And you grew out of the garden, too, I'm thinking," Martin said kindly. She showed a flushed, half laughing surprise at the compliment. The policeman rose. "You know where I am," he told her. "If you want any help, any time, I'll be there."

He took her small hand in his again. "You're the first friendly person I've met here," the girl said with a half sob, "I get so lonesome I could die!"

Policeman Martin strode away from the house in deep thought. "By jinks," he exclaimed suddenly, "I'll do it!"

THE young man approached him next morning. "Well, officer," he said cheerily, "how's the world?"

Martin shook his head, artfully dubious.

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

"Well, I have my worries same as anybody else," he confided.

The young man looked genuinely concerned. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing much," replied Martin somberly. "Only my wife is sick. That's one thing. And a little niece of mine is going to have the disappointment of her life. That's another thing. You see, I promised to take the kid to the policemen's benefit dance, and with the wife sick, I can't go. My niece has been looking forward to the dance so much—she's just here from the South and doesn't know many people. I don't know how I'll have the nerve to tell her. She's kind of shy and doesn't know many people here—and then of course I wouldn't let her go around with everybody. But it's going to be an awful disappointment!"

"Too bad," the young man agreed, sympathetically.

"She's a pretty girl," the policeman continued. "Like a flower—blue eyes and the tiniest hands and feet. And dance! [Of course she could dance, thought Martin, a girl as graceful as that!] If she's got one fault it's that she's too old-fashioned."

"I call that a virtue," the Westerner interposed.

"Well, I wish—" The thought seemed to strike him suddenly: "Well, here you are, a nice young fellow with nothing to do. Why don't *you* take her to that dance?"

"I?" said the young man, alarmed. "Really—well, why not?" he said abruptly. "That is, if your niece—"

Martin appeared to be reflecting. "I think I'd better explain that you're a friend of mine."

"Of course," assented the other. "I'm James Breck, from Wyoming, by the way."

The policeman smiled genially. "Well, this is real kind of you. I think you'll enjoy yourself. Here's Willsie's address. I'll tell her you'll call for her this evening."

Slightly perturbed for the success of his plot, Martin called upon Willsie. "I'm going to ask a favor of you," he began rather awkwardly.

She seemed pleased. "It's so nice of you to be so friendly. What is it?"

"Well," he explained, "there's a young fellow—a friend of mine—here from the West. He was going to the policemen's benefit dance with my wife and me and my wife got sick so we can't go. It's quite a disappointment to him; it's pretty lonesome for a young fellow here, and he doesn't know any nice girls he could ask to go with him to a dance. There's lots of temptations for a young fellow fixed like him, and I was just thinking maybe you'd like to go with him. I'll tell him you're a young lady I knew—"

Willsie turned a very deep pink. "Oh, I couldn't!" she said shyly.

"He's pretty bashful," Martin said tentatively.

"So am I," laughed Willsie. "Terribly! But perhaps I should—I know what it is to be lonely—"

"Of course you'll go," Martin declared heartily. "He's a nice fellow; you'll like him."

He hurried out before she could change her mind. "Thomas," he addressed himself, chuckling, "you're getting to be an excellent liar! You'd better be thinking of a new one to explain to Annie where those tickets went."

JAMES BRECK sprang to his feet and stared speechlessly as Willsie came into the room. He had expected a shy, prettily commonplace little country girl, but not this—this vision. She wore a simple little dress of soft pink stuff, cut modestly low, and there were pink ribbon flowers in her gold-brown hair, silver satin slippers on her slender little feet.

For a moment they stood wide-eyed, staring at each other. "Oh—you!" Willsie, whispered, which was a queer thing for her to say, because she had never seen him before.

And Breck was thinking breathlessly. "If those fellows—I laughed at—for falling in love at first sight—could see me now!"

Finally he recovered sufficient presence of mind to take her thin little coat from her arm and help her on with it.

"Awfully good of you," he murmured, "to go with me!"

She smiled with a pretty wave of pink over her face. "I feel like Cinderella," she confessed shyly. "It's been so long since I've gone out anywhere—"

"Perhaps," he declared suspiciously, "you *are* Cinderella. Yes, there are the silver slippers. Will you have to go at twelve?"

"Yes," she sighed, "I shall! I go to work at eight in the morning."

Gently and protectively he tucked her hand in his arm. They rode in a taxicab to the hall where the dance was to be, and Willsie, her eyes shining with pleasure and excitement, almost danced up the steps.

"Here, here!" exclaimed Breck half seriously. "I'm afraid you'll fly away!"

The crowd at the dance were friendly and good-natured; most of them were middle-aged but they danced with the rollicking enjoyment of youth.

"Shall we just dance together?" whispered Breck.

"I'd rather," she told him shyly; "I don't know any one else." So rapidly had their acquaintance grown in half an hour.

He took her in his arms. She was so light that sometimes he had to tighten his hold on her to make sure she was there. They moved together in perfect rhythm, seldom speaking. Sometimes their eyes met happily; they felt like old friends.

Suddenly he exclaimed, dismayed, "Cinderella, it's one o'clock!"

She laughed with a charming touch of audacity—gone all her timidity and reluctance. "I don't care. I'm going to stay—to the end."

"I wish," he murmured, "that there was no end. I wish we could dance and dance always—together, looking at each other. Cinderella, haven't you a fairy godmother who could do the trick for us? Keep us always young and always dancing?"

She smiled dreamily. "She has forgotten about me," she murmured. "The clock struck twelve long ago. Perhaps—the prince—forgot, too."

Breck looked at her, and suddenly she blushed. How silly to say that about the prince! They laughed a little, into each other's eyes; in the noisy room only they two seemed alive. The rest of the dancers were only shadows swaying against the wall.

When he left her at the boarding-house door it was three o'clock. She accepted the [illegible] captivating assumption of [illegible] Cinderella's clock is an [illegible]ched. "Oh, but it [illegible] asked h[illegible] place?"

She smile[illegible]

"It *has* been a happy evening, hasn't it?" murmured Breck. "I feel that we have become—good friends. Do you?"

Willsie gave a little nod. She withdrew her hands from his hold and with a farewell smile ran lightly into the house. Breck stood gazing at the closed door until a man came along and regarded him suspiciously. Then with a light happy laugh he went on.

NEXT morning Officer Martin turned from scowling after the fashionable Mrs. Morrison to discover Breck at his elbow, grinning joyously.

"Mr. Martin," said Breck, "I never knew before that traffic policemen wore wings!" Before Martin could do more than grin quizzically in response Breck strode away, walking springily, aglow with the zest of life.

"Well, well!" beamed Thomas Martin, looking after him. "What do you think of that? I rather guess he enjoyed that dance, all right!"

Breck and Willsie went to dinner in a quiet little restaurant where they could have a corner to themselves. The girl's flowerlike face was radiant. Her happy, silvery little laugh rang out as he talked to her; they were both light-hearted with an intoxication of joy they scarcely understood.

"I think you're like a pansy," Breck murmured. He amused Willsie by trying to decide which flower she made him think of most. None of them ever quite satisfied him. "You're like a whole nosegay," he declared finally. "All of them!"

When they left the restaurant he said abruptly: "Do you like flowers? Of course you do." He stopped before a florist's and went in, coming back shortly with a great bouquet of orchids.

"Oh!" gasped Willsie. "You shouldn't! They're so expensive."

He laughed gently, but her look of distress sobered him.

"Don't worry about that, dear," he said softly. They both flushed at the word of endearment.

"You see," Willsie went on timidly, trying to spare his feelings, "I know what it is, to [illegible]bothered about money. I have never had a great deal. And I shouldn't like to have you spend money—like this—if perhaps, you know, you might need it—" She

was getting very much involved in words, and very red.

"Oh, you darling!" murmured Breck. "Look here, Willsie," he went on—he had got unconsciously to the use of her first name—"I came here on a holiday and I've got just so much money I'm bound to spend. I wouldn't respect myself if I didn't. So don't you worry. It's all right, dear."

She held her peace, but the look of distress returned when he sent a daily box of chocolates to her boarding-house, and followed them up by sweet-scented nosegays, carefully selected by himself.

"He's spending all his money!" wailed Willsie in the grim privacy of her boarding-house bedroom. She did not recognize this intensely personal interest in his financial condition as an advanced stage in her interest in the man; she was a victim of that common malady known as the nesting instinct. If he spent all his money on flowers and sweetmeats what would he do for—well, for a house! Willsie, of course, was the last to recognize the condition in herself. She thought she was merely trying to hold him back from extravagance.

During the week they went to dinner together every evening, to the movies or a play—sitting always in the cheapest seats. Willsie insisted upon it. And on Sunday they went out in the country.

They sat down close to each other on the grass. Both drew a deep breath, responding to the impelling call of nature. Willsie took off her cheap little hat and the soft wind touched her pretty hair lightly as Breck longed to do. They were very silent, their eyes dreaming over the green, sun-flecked countryside. At last the man said, stammering:

"Willsie, do you think you'd like to live in the West?"

She turned with a quick, deep flush. He took her hand and held it. "I love you, Willsie. Do you think you could marry me?"

Willsie grew still pinker. "I'd die—if I couldn't," she whispered.

Breck clasped her joyously. "Willsie, you darling!" he exclaimed. His lips pressed against hers. Willsie's slender arms clung tightly about his neck.

"I never really thought it could happen," he sighed after a long interval. "You're so wonderful!"

They began to make plans, interspersing the words with brief, sweet kisses. "I can give you anything you want, dear," he told her; "I've plenty of money. I could have told you before, but you were so sweet—worrying about my extravagance. I just deliberately led you on. I love to have you worry about me, Willsie. But you won't need to worry about that—any more. I shall buy you flowers and new dresses every day—I never was so glad to have money before.

"You see, I've got plenty. Dad died when I was barely twenty and I had to stick close and look after business. Never had time to play, or think about falling in love. Finally I got tired and discontented—I decided to take a holiday and come East; play awhile. It isn't good for a man to work all the time. Well, I came. But it was so lonesome here I wished I was back on the ranch again. I'd just about decided to give it up and go back when I met your uncle—"

"My uncle!" she repeated, surprised.

"Yes—Officer Martin."

She looked at him wide-eyed. "He isn't my uncle. I never saw him until I asked him to find my dog. But he told me—you were an old friend of his from the West, and his wife was sick, and he couldn't take you to the dance, and you were disappointed—"

After an incredulous moment Breck burst into a peal of laughter. "Who would have suspected he had a matchmaker's heart in that big chest! Bless him for all his lies. He gave me you, Willsie."

TRAFFIC-OFFICER MARTIN, with his feet comfortably propped up before him, was drowsing over a newspaper when his buxom wife Annie came in.

"A letter by messenger," said Annie with excitement.

He took the letter and scrutinized its outside carefully. Then he opened it. It was the announcement of the marria[illegible] Willsie Carter to Mr. Ja[illegible] home at the Bar-A Ra[illegible] after October first."

[illegible] it seemed [illegible] discussed wh[illegible] so busy!

[illegible]n't quite

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

At *the* Sign *of the* Ash

An Inn Which Is Recommended to Those Silly Souls Who Believe That Romance and Adventure Are No Longer to Be Found

By Nelia Gardner White

Illustration by Sidney H. Riesenberg

LATE afternoon on the old Transit Road. Peter Magavern was walking along through the dust, walking swiftly, a little hope crowding the loneliness in his eyes. All along, on the hillsides, there were great patches of red that became orange, and green that became red-brown; sumac like fire. The air itself was hazy with a lovely faint lavender. After the passionless green and brown of the city autumn, it was like a call.

Occasionally a car passed, clouds of white dust in its wake. One man asked Peter to ride. Peter shook his head. It couldn't be far now. Then suddenly he saw it, the old inn he had come to find. He saw the great ash tree, ablaze with color, that had made him remember the place for so many years. It stood at the corner of the inn, so close that one great branch spread out, perforce, fanwise, upon the roof. It made you forget the inn itself. Run down at the heel was the inn, like an old shoe that has never been patched or polished; still, as if only the ghosts of old pompous tavern landlords lingered there. Stillness—something blessedly comforting came over Peter as he looked up at the dim, almost obliterated sign hanging crookedly above the door—he had ached for stillness so long, and now to find it!

As he came up the path all the old noises that he was fleeing from came up and smote him with one ugly assaulting memory: the screech of trains; the rattle and rumble of cars over pavements; the ceaseless clatter of tongues; whistles and hum of factories, and just folks walking, that great unending hurry along the streets; the unforgettable sound of the Sunday paper thudding against the door just as he went in and found his father; the hateful sound of the undertaker's suave voice; the harshness under the conventional sympathy in the lawyer's tones; the little sounds that crept and crawled and rustled around the house after his father was gone—all cold sounds, no warmth anywhere. And at the office afterward—no eager, friendly opening of the door; only quiet or angrily cautious opening by creditors, impatient opening by lawyers.

He drew a deep breath, pushed the noises out of his consciousness. Here he would find peace—find, perhaps, himself. His tired eyes and mouth looked for a moment like a boy's. Dull—oh, yes, it looked dull—but thank Heaven for that! Everything in him cried out for dullness, for quiet, for a chance to work at last at the thing he had wanted to work at all his life.

Cutting suddenly across the stillness came a voice, deep and angry. Peter turned from the path, went around the corner of the inn, beneath that great pulsingly alive thing of orange—the mountain ash—and all unexpectedly, unwontedly, found himself in the midst of adventure.

Beside the woodpile stood a man, a giant of a man, with dead-black hair. In the doorway stood a woman, drab enough at

first glance but taking on, as one watched, a queer pathos and something almost akin to charm. You could, at least, imagine from the softness of her fair hair and the wistfulness of her eyes that charm had been there once. Seated in the leaves, his back against the woodpile, was a queer childlike man with great staring eyes and a twisted mouth.

The woman saw Peter instantly but the man did not turn.

"I don't know what you've been saying!" There was a stinging lash in every word. "But you'll never say it again, so help me! Posing as a martyr, eh? Making folks think I drive you like a slave? Making some yellow-livered, crawling sons of river lice talk on the street corners about what a hard man you've married? Well, I've stopped 'em—all the sly, wagging tongues! They'll never say it behind my back again. Do you want to know what I've done? Want to know what you're going to do from now on?

"Nothing. Put on your meek look, but fold your hands along with it! Don't aim to ever say again you've done more'n a day's work in a day! I drove down to the Orrington Home, after I heard Jed talking, and I got a girl. And, by jumping Jupiter, if I ever catch you doing another lick of work, I'll put the whip on you! She's in the front room, waiting. Go in and tell her about supper!"

Peter could not take his eyes from the woman's face. Fright, a flicker of angry rebellion, hope, hopeless submission, one after another, came and went. Twice Peter tried to interrupt, but the woman's eyes begged him not to do so. She turned, without replying, and went in. At that moment the man turned and saw Peter. He looked Peter up and down and began to laugh, a deep, rumbling sound that shook his great body. When his face was still again, with a queer, uncanny, shriller echoing, the laugh went on. For just a second fright clutched at Peter's heart. Then he saw that the echo was from the half-wit by the woodpile. Peter had an impulse to turn and run down the path and up the road to the little station. But instead he asked, as he had all the time intended to ask:

"Could I get a room here for a few weeks?"

With a sudden and complete change, the laughter and mockery were wiped from the man's face.

"Thought you were another agent—they pester us so!" he apologized. "Come in."

PETER followed him through the narrow, long dining-room to the great room across the front of the house. It was a room that Peter's architect father would have glowed to see—beamed ceiling, long, small-paned windows, a great fireplace, a wide staircase. But Peter scarcely noticed the room, for his eyes fell at once upon the girl who had come from the Orrington Home.

She stood in front of the fireplace, her face turned from the window toward the little gray woman. She had on a middy blouse and blue skirt and looked like a child. Very straight she stood there, her head lifted a little, her eyes eager and warm with happiness. Her hair was a soft brown, but it caught the sunlight until there was a sort of golden haze above the small, vivid face. The eyes, gray, long-lashed, held him most. And Peter thought, "Why, she's nothing but a child!"

Then the man's deep voice boomed out again.

"Here's the book—put your name here!"

Peter bent to write his name in the great book, huge as a big Bible, shabby and tattered at the edges, and, as he did so, the name above his stared up at him in impudent, bold round letters—"Steve Grayling." For the second time, the impulse swept over Peter to go, not to take a room in this queer old place with its bullying host and startling half-wits and characters such as this Steve Grayling looked to be. The thing he was seeking was so obviously not here. He hesitated, looking up as he did so, and saw again that slim, eager child by the fireplace. He wrote his name clearly.

As he followed the man up the stairs, he heard the girl speak. There was a curious golden quality to her voice that matched her hair in the sunlight.

In the small, plain room, Peter's host turned on him suddenly, his black eyes refusing a lie.

"Are you a rum hound?" he asked, fiercely quiet.

Peter had a swift wonder as to what he'd have said had he been a rum hound. He managed a small smile.

"Why, no!" he said. "I just wanted"—

the irony of what he was about to say deepened his smile to real amusement—"a quiet place where I could rest—and perhaps write."

"Quiet—hell's bells! Guess you'll get plenty of that! Hear the branches creakin' in the pines up above the house after the snow comes. Frogs in the spring—crickets now. Quiet's the thing we've got plenty of here—it's free!"

He went out and left Peter alone. From out the window Peter could see the branches of the ash tree, faintly colorful in the twilight. From somewhere out in the yard there came suddenly, in great rollicking, booming tones:

"Oh, the waves they hit the moon,
And the nor'wester did blow—
But the four jolly lads from Cork,
They wouldn't go below!
Oho—oho—oho—oho—ho—ho—ho—ho!"

Then, a little higher, not quite so sea-charged:

"Oho—oho—oho—oho—ho—ho—ho—ho!"

The half-wit.

There was a certain jolly friendliness about the song and, Peter thought, about the singer, there in the dusk. If he only hadn't seen him first! Quiet—hell's bells!

Peter had an instant's wonder as to whether every one thought the same, that their ways were the quiet ways just because they were the familiar ways. After a little he went down to supper. There were only his host and the little gray woman, Steve Grayling, the new girl and himself. Steve Grayling surprised Peter. He was a silent, lean man with too shrewd eyes and too thin lips. Peter thought of the writing and wondered that it should not have been a stingy, cramped backhand. Instantly, without any reason behind it, Peter felt an enmity toward the man. Once he saw the man's eyes rest on Mary, the wife, with a queer, mocking friendliness.

Once Mary half rose to go to the kitchen for something. Her husband's black eyes looked full at her, and she sat down.

"Will you get more bread, Carey?" she asked the girl.

Peter could not keep his eyes from the girl. He saw now that she was not so young as he had thought, but she was graceful beyond all imagining. He thought, once, that her eagerness was a little dimmed.

"Sufferin' Jehosaphat! Forget to put the coffee in the pot? Captain Jinks—call this a piece of pie? Think you're feeding pernickety old maids—or orphans? Bring in a piece that looks bigger'n a sliver on the plate!"

That was Sim, the host. It was not so much what he said, as the way he said it. It might have been merely good-natured hospitality but, instead, the manner of saying seemed to throw a mantle of stinginess and thoughtlessness over Mary and the girl. Peter saw it took all Mary's will power to stay in her chair and let the girl take over the burden of serving. But she stayed there.

AFTER supper, Peter went at once to his room. He was very tired, but he had waited so long for a chance to write! He got out paper and pencil, sat down by the little stand with its oil lamp. He could hear the sound of dishes rattling. Then a car chugged into the driveway. There were more voices below. Laughter and much talking. Peter could not even begin to write. These people were, of course, nothing to him, and he tried to tell himself so, but he was as interested in their goings and comings as if he had known them all his life. It had always been that way. He had always liked people but because of his shyness he could never get near to them. His father had been quite the opposite—he had despised folk and been close to them all, nevertheless. He wished he might go down to the kitchen and talk for a little while with that child with the golden voice.

The laughter grew louder downstairs. Sim Kilean suddenly burst into song:

"There once was a whale—"

Chiming in familiarly came the other men's voices:

"A whale—oh, yes, a whale!"

Then again, Sim's great rollicking voice:

"And a mermaid, too!"

"Oh, yes—yes—a mermaid, too!"

came the chorus.

Peter felt a sudden, queer liking displace his dislike for his host. There was something so friendly in the big voice. He pushed his paper aside, got up and made his way to the stairs. They did not pause in their

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

chant as he joined them, shyly eager. After a while they got out checkers and chessmen and Peter found himself across the chessboard from Sim. Sim could play chess—Peter's antagonism was quite gone as they played. Then the door opened to a newcomer. For a second Peter saw Sim's eyes as the man came near. Peter felt a queer coldness. Sim's eyes were hot with hate. The men all greeted the newcomer.

"H'lo, Jed!" "Draw up, Jed!" "Give you a piece in a jiffy, and beat you, Jed!"

Only Sim did not greet him. Peter noted it, knew it was intentional. But not till their game was finished did Sim make any open sign of his anger. The other men drank a little occasionally but Sim did not. He got to his feet, his giant figure towering above them all blackly.

"Mary!" he called peremptorily.

Mary came swiftly in from the kitchen. Sim turned to Jed.

"Jed Ringer," he said—and there was steel in his voice—"get up!"

Jed, a good-humored man with a red face, rose, smiling uncomprehendingly at Kilean. Peter had a glimpse of Steve Grayling's face beside the fire, smiling ever so slightly.

"Come over here," Sim's voice commanded Jed shortly.

Jed's easy face hardened a little. "What for?" he asked.

Sim reached over—it would have seemed incredible to Peter had he not seen it—took Jed by the coat collar, lifted him easily over a chair and put him down in front of Mary.

"Get down on your knees, you sneakin', snivelin' son of a rat!" he said. "And tell Mrs. Kilean you were mistaken when you made them remarks down by the market this morning—about her being driven into her coffin by overworkin'—and the other thing you said about—about— Do it quick, or—" His hand tightened on Jed's collar, pushed the little man down till he was on his knees. Peter saw hate take the place of Jed's wonder. He saw, too, the half-smile disappear from Steve's face.

It was then—with Jed on his knees, Mary white with embarrassment, Sim ugly with rage—that Carey, the girl from the home, came like an angry young whirlwind in from the dining-room. She came straight to Mary, put a strong young arm about her and faced Sim, eyes blazing, unafraid.

"Why, you ugly bully!" she cried. "You great, big ugly bully! Don't you see you're frightening Mrs. Kilean?" She turned on the rest. "What are you men sitting there for—letting him do it? Does he bully you all that way? Get up!" she said to Jed.

Sim, in his amazement, loosened his grip. Jed got to his feet.

"Now get back to your game—or, no, sing awhile! Sing the one about the whale again!"

With her arm still about Mary, she began to sing, as if she had known the song from babyhood. And, in spite of the fact that her voice was young and clear and golden, she managed somehow to put a swing in it so exactly like that of Sim that the men were swept unquestioningly into the chorus. Peter, a maker of plays from his toes to his head, was amazed. How had she put that timbre into her voice? How had she been, for the moment, so exactly Sim?

MARY slipped away and for a moment Carey was left alone with the roomful of men. All her youth stood out in her vivid face. Peter thought of how impossible it would be for her to understand these men—Sim and Steve and the rest. Queerly glad that he was there with her, he joined in occasionally on a repeated line of song. The end of the song seemed a dismissal. Carey went and the men got up to go. They went awkwardly, a little embarrassed at the scene. At the door Jed turned. He spoke with no show of haste or fear.

"Mebbe you think, Sim Kilean, that you can bully your wife. Mebbe you can. Mebbe you think you got away with what you tried to pull tonight. Don't think it. There'll be more to it!"

He went out, his little figure invested for the moment with a queer dignity. Sim stared after him. Only Steve Grayling and Peter were left now. Steve poked at the fire, put on another log—Peter saw that he did it as if he were an old watcher at that fireplace. Sim stared a long moment at the closed door. Then he looked past Peter to Steve. And Peter saw that the ugliness was still there in Sim's eyes, that it was an accumulation of many long-held grievances, that if it could not be satisfied upon Jed it would reach out for some one else. That some one else was going to be Steve Grayling. Again Peter felt swift surprise at knowing

he was on Sim's side. Steve looked around then, aware suddenly of the ugly stillness. He had the audacity to smile at Sim mockingly. Sim did not smile back. Steve spoke clearly, well knowing the deadliness of the remark he was making and yet saying it as a tag for his own innocence.

"Jed's a dirty little scoundrel—gossips like an old woman!" He grinned.

"Gossip's one thing—facts are another. Know what he said?"

"No—wait a minute—let me go up and get my pipe—tell me when I come down!"

Unconcernedly, altogether too unconcernedly, he walked past Sim to the wide staircase, but Peter saw his hand once as it gripped the railing and the veins stood out on it in ugly tensity. Peter had a sudden stifled feeling. He turned to the door, went out into the crisp night. He somehow did not want to be there when Steve came down—or when he didn't.

Outside it was refreshingly cool. Leaves rustled now and then in crackling, flurrying whispers in the yard. Peter took a deep breath. He walked down to the road and along beside it for a little way. He felt like a man dreaming, or as if he were watching a queer, jumbled play with no key to the climax. What was it all about, anyway? Why was Mary so afraid, so submissive? Why were Steve Grayling's eyes always upon her, mockingly friendly? What had happened to work Sim into such a rage? What had Jed said about Mary? What was Steve doing here? Lumber—had he said?

How had Sim persuaded a girl like Carey to come there? How had such a girl happened to be in a Home, anyway? Why, with all that charm, hadn't she found a home before? And that queer happening before the fire.

All the questions, the puzzling, confusing happenings, thronged through Peter's brain in bewildering chaos. He wondered why he had stayed; he wondered why he didn't go now, down this road to some other shelter, turn his back upon the mysteries and quarrels of the inn and find somewhere else the peace he sought. Peace? As Sim had said—hell's bells!

But he did not go on. He turned back, not knowing, perhaps, why he turned, but conscious of some tie holding him, nevertheless.

He went up the path, paused for a few more minutes beneath the great ash tree. There was to him something satisfying, calming about it, even there in the moonlight. Then he became suddenly aware that some one was sitting on the little bench by the tree. It was Carey. One arm was flung along the back of the seat and the bright head was down on the arm. Peter thought she was crying.

"Why, Miss Carey—what is it! Don't cry, child!" His shyness vanished at her need. She straightened quickly, looked up at him. "I don't wonder you're frightened," he said. "I'm half scared myself—a rummy old place—don't know what they could be thinking of, to bring a child here!"

Suddenly he saw, with amazement, that she was laughing.

"I'm not scared!" she mocked him softly. "And I'm not a child! I'm eighteen. And they didn't think anything when they brought me here. I came of my own free will. Miss Coley begged me not to. I—did you think I was a regular orphan?"

"Why—they said—" Peter was immensely embarrassed to find Carey grown up and laughing at him.

"Did you think they let orphans run off with folks like Sim Kilean? Father knew Miss Coley—she's the matron at the Home—so I went to her afterward. I thought maybe there would be lots to do, to help me not remember so much. And every morning I dished up seventy-nine dishes of oatmeal and seventy-nine dishes of prunes, four prunes to a dish! Oh, I was so tired of it—so everlastingly tired of it! And yet I couldn't bear to think of leaving Miss Coley. She understands so—why, she understands everything, even how a child can't possibly swallow oatmeal if it has said it can't! And she understood that I wanted to come because it looked like a kind of adventure. It wasn't, you see, as though I'd expected it to be a home!"

HOME! Like tears through laughter the word came to him laden with heartache.

"It doesn't look much like a home, does it? I guess I'd have to do my own mothering, if it was—and fathering, too! Couldn't you cry to look at that little woman—giving up everything, being young and pretty and happy, giving up life just because he says so? And couldn't you shake

her, too? And Steve—I don't know his other name—but don't you want to slap him? Don't you want to scratch him, hurt him terribly? He loves Mary, doesn't he?

"And Sim—don't you want to spank him?" she chuckled suddenly at the absurdity of the thought. "We used to play things at the Home," she went on, "down in the orchard, and I used to like to have Sim Kilean for the hero. He drives by the Home often and always is singing. You'd think he'd been to sea, wouldn't you? Why, when I heard him, I'd think I was back up in the little town in Massachusetts where Father and I used to go summers. There were lots of old sailors there and there was one who had sailed for fifty-seven years. He would sit on the beach all day telling me stories about the sea—you could feel the storms and the call of the ships. But they say Sim Kilean never saw the ocean.

"Oh, I was telling about the plays—the rest, they always wanted Sim for the villain, but I wanted him for the hero. And some of the girls shivered when they knew I was coming here. But I was glad. I tingled all over, I was so glad! This ash tree—I've loved it ever since I first saw it! It's like—like being near Father again, to sit here under it, everything so still all around. It seems as though all the queer things in there aren't real. It seems as though the whole world's right; it even seems all right to be talking to you all this time—when I don't even know your name.

"Father used to say that names were only handles to hang conventions on, and if he liked folks he used to go right up to them and talk to them. He had friends everywhere—so many, many friends, all over the world! Why, there's a countess—an honest-to-goodness countess, who wrote to Father! And there was a little man in France who made perfumes. But I thought Father liked Miss Coley best and so I came to her. Then this chance came and I thought it would be an adventure such as Father loved—he always ran to meet adventures. Why, once he was a bootblack for three days, just so he'd know how a bootblack felt! And he often said to me that I'd never be able to do what I want to do unless I knew something about life—life of folks that seemed different. When Sim Kilean came, I thought, 'Father'd say this was my chance!' So I came."

For an instant something like the look of a lost child flickered across the eager face. It seemed that she was catching out at his friendliness as at a hand.

"It is—you do think it's an adventure, don't you?" she begged.

"Why, yes!" Peter's rather whimsical smile flashed out in the moonlight. "Why, yes, Miss Carey—I certainly do! It begins like an adventure—it looks like one. The folks in there were just made for adventuring. I have a feeling that it's going to be the greatest—"

"What's that?" Carey got to her feet suddenly.

"What?" asked Peter. "I didn't hear anything."

Carey started for the door and Peter followed quickly. With a sudden premonitory desire to shield her, Peter stepped ahead of her and opened the door, but she was in the room beside him before he could stop her.

Stretched full length upon the floor, his right arm caught queerly under a chair round, his head on the bricked flooring before the fireplace, lay Sim Kilean—a little stream of blood trickling across his forehead.

FOR several long seconds neither Peter nor Carey could move. Then they were on their knees, on either side of him.

"Mr. Kilean! Sim Kilean!" Carey's voice commanded him sharply to speak.

But the huge figure lay appallingly still. Peter was trying to find his pulse.

"He's not dead—I don't think he's dead," he said at last. He wondered why his own voice seemed so small and far away. He went to the stairs.

"Grayling!" he called sharply. "Grayling!" He knew, even as he spoke, that Grayling would not answer. Silence above.

He came back to Sim's side. Carey still knelt there, her eyes wide and frightened, her small hands trying to shake the great shoulders to some life.

"He's dead! He's dead!" she whispered.

"No, he's not!" Peter insisted. He brought cold water—it was of no avail. He spoke then to the panic in Carey's eyes. He tried to make his voice sharp. "Look here, Miss Carey, you'll have to buck up—looks as though we've got to take charge here! Grayling's cleared out—Heaven knows what Mrs. Kilean'll do! Better get her,

though—or I will." He turned again to the stairs.

"Mrs. Kilean!" he called, trying not to let his own voice sound too frightened. Silence. He went up the stairs a little way. "Mrs. Kilean!" he called again. There was not a sound in the big inn. He looked back at Carey. Something cold swept him from head to foot.

"Carey," he said, "Mrs. Kilean doesn't answer. Will you come up with me to wake her?" He couldn't leave her down there alone with Sim.

Carey came swiftly. There was a little lamp on the stand in the dim hall. The shadows seemed ominously still.

"I think this is her room," Carey said.

Peter tapped.

"Mrs. Kilean—wake up!" he called. The shadows seemed only more still and fear-filled. "We'll have to go in," said Peter. He turned the knob of the door. The room was in darkness. He reached for the little lamp and held it high in the doorway. The room was empty.

They went down the stairs in silence, but, half the way down, Carey's cold fingers reached out with frightened pleading and Peter took them tight in his. Peter thought fast in those few seconds. Alone, absolutely alone with a man who'd been shot—maybe murdered. Carey, hardly more than a child, here in this inn that was obviously no more than a roadhouse. Grayling gone—Mrs. Kilean gone with him. Responsibility swooped down on his tired shoulders, but with the small hand resting in his, his shoulders squared suddenly to meet it.

"Carey," he said, "it's late. I can't take time to argue but you've got to be found at the Home tomorrow morning."

She interrupted him, her fright suddenly and bravely banished.

"You'll have to go for the doctor," she said. "Go to Simmons's—the next house—and phone to the village—Doctor Bradley in Norwich. I'll stay here. Shall we try to move him first?"

Peter gripped her hand hard. "You're a brick!" he said huskily. "I'll hurry. No, we won't move him till the doctor comes."

Carey sat down on the floor beside Sim. The fire had died down till there were only a few sparks among the charred bits of wood. She shivered a little but looked up reassuringly at Peter.

"Hurry!" she begged. "I won't be frightened—I promise you I won't be frightened!"

ALL the way to the next house and back, Peter kept thinking as he ran of that small brave figure sitting on the floor, keeping watch over Sim Kilean. Never in all his life had he felt such fear for the safety of another. He was tortured by a thousand fears before he regained the inn. When he opened the door, breathlessly, Carey sat where he had left her. Sim still lay there, his huge, inert body somehow terribly pitiful. His face, with the anger and scorn wiped from it, was curiously like that of an overgrown boy.

Peter dropped into a chair by the door.

"Glory—it took me forever!" he said weakly.

"Oh, not so long!" The brave voice had a note of strain in it. "He—he hasn't moved!"

"I—I was afraid you'd be scared!" Peter came over beside her.

"Well—I was, some. Why, Mr.—" With a startled incredulity that she should not, even now, know his name, she glanced up at him.

"Peter," prompted Peter. "What frightened you?"

"I—I thought I saw a face over there by the window—that one by the stairs. It—it seemed as though some one was on their knees and then dropped down on the grass."

Peter sat down beside her, took her hands in his. They trembled.

"There—there," he said. "There—there, don't be frightened! I'll take care of you. I won't let anything hurt you. There—there!" He was patting her hands gently. "I'll get you out of this in the morning. I'm darn sorry, Miss Carey—"

The doctor's car came chugging into the driveway. Peter got to his feet.

"It's Sim Kilean, doctor. He's been shot—I don't think he's dead!"

The doctor bent quickly to Sim.

"Not dead!" he said. "Close to it. Get some water hot. Build up this fire. Bring some pillows!"

A vast relief swept over Peter. Carey went to the kitchen for hot water. Peter went for pillows, brought kindling and started the fire with awkward, unaccustomed fingers. The doctor did not speak

again for nearly an hour, except to order them to do this or that. At last there was a flutter of eyelids, a brief moment of half-consciousness.

"Is there a bed downstairs?" the doctor asked then.

Peter found a small bedroom off the dining-room.

"We'll have to get him in there—it'll take all three of us."

It was hard work getting that great bulk into the bedroom and onto the bed. But they did it at last. Then the doctor turned to them sharply.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

Peter told him, as clearly as he could, what he knew. But it all sounded jumbled and queer. The doctor smiled a little as Peter spoke, tiredly, stammering.

"OH, DON'T imagine I suspect you!" the doctor burst out at last. "Maybe you did it—but nobody'll believe it. You don't look the part. Well—bless my soul!" He became aware for the first time of Carey as a personality. "Bless my soul—it's little Miss Carey from the Home! What on earth are you doing here, child?"

She shot a quick smile of mischievous, undaunted humor at Peter.

"I was helping out with the work," she said.

"Bless my soul! How old are you—thirteen?"

"Eighteen," said Carey, flushing a little.

Peter interrupted, suddenly recognizing the doctor as a friend.

"Doctor, I wish you'd send some one here, early, to take Carey back to Miss Coley at the Home. Some one who can keep still."

Carey cut in, chin high. "Don't be silly!" she said. "Didn't every one see me here last night? What good would that do? And who'd look after the meals and things? Send some one to help in the kitchen, instead, Doctor Bradley—some one who'll be an irreproachable chaperon. Mrs. Kilean is gone, you know, and though you insist on tagging me as an infant, I'm really not. I can't run away."

"Well, well—bless my soul!" the doctor said again. "Have to stay tonight anyway, I guess. I'll have to wait till there's some change—take you back myself in the morning!"

After that they settled down to the long watch. Near morning Carey fell asleep in her chair.

"Carry her out to the couch in the dining-room," the doctor said. "Never saw such a girl!"

Peter carried her out to the dining-room and as he lifted the slight figure in his arms, something new and warm crept all through him. She seemed so very small and tired and brave and beautiful. Who was she, anyway? Who was this father of whom she spoke? How could Miss Coley, or any one else, have let her come, even adventuring, to such a place as this? He put her down on the couch gently, took the little quilt that was folded at the foot of the couch, and covered her carefully. He had a queer, unreasonable, impossible impulse to bend down and kiss her—then the crimson swept from his chin to his forehead, all alone there in the dark, because he had even had such an impulse. Peter had never known girls—never, at any rate, really ached to kiss one. He knew, of a sudden, that Carey would never seem a little girl to him again. He hurried back to the doctor and Sim.

"Afraid I'll have to notify the sheriff," the doctor said. "What's your real opinion—Steve Grayling?"

"Looks like it. You could see they hated each other. And though I'd just come, it looked to me as though he and Mrs. Kilean had some sort of an understanding. Her being gone makes it look all the more that way."

"*She* didn't do it?"

"Couldn't have. Never saw any one meeker—more ready to give in. No spunk at all!"

"What about Jed? They quarreled, you said?"

"Yes—hadn't really thought of him, though. He'd said something about Mrs. Kilean—about her working too hard—and something about her and Steve, probably. Sim was terribly angry; think there'd have been more trouble right there if Carey hadn't come in and stopped it. But he looked such an easy-going little man, I wouldn't have thought he'd murder any one. He did say, though, that there'd be more to their quarrel."

"Jed—don't know—he's got a terrible temper when it gets roused. Every one knows it, too. I don't believe he did it, though. Steve's the man. But he's slippery

Carey still knelt at Sim's side. "He's dead! He's dead!" she whispered.

as an eel. He's put over some of the cleverest things in lumber here that you ever heard of. But they can't get anything on him. Who do you think looked in the window?"

"I don't know—maybe no one. She was all alone and frightened. An awful thing to do, to leave her here, but I had to go! Probably the shadows came alive to her."

At last the doctor rose. "Got to get back—important case in town," he said. "The minute he shows any signs of consciousness, give him a spoonful of this medicine. Give it then every half-hour till I get back. I'll try to get here by noon. Better let the girl rest till then. I'll try to bring some one back with me—maybe I can get Mrs. Mulligan. She's capable, and a good nurse besides. Don't worry if the sheriff comes and don't let him nag at little Miss Carey too much. She may have backbone but a woman's nerves are tricky; they won't stand too much!"

He went out and presently Peter heard his car going fast toward town. He drew his chair closer to the bed. His eyes felt very heavy but he knew he must keep awake till the doctor came again at noon. The quiet after all the excitement and strain was almost more than he could fight against. Twice he fell into a half-doze, waking with a terrified sense of sleeping at the post.

IT WAS about ten o'clock when Sim's eyes suddenly opened, clear and seemingly sane.

"Where the devil did you get that gun?" he asked. Then his eyes closed again before Peter could even give him the medicine.

A queer puzzlement came over Peter. The voice was so different from the voice of the raging Sim he had heard the evening before. It was firm—but not angry. It was surprised.

Carey stood suddenly in the doorway. She carried a cup of hot coffee.

"I'll fix something else soon," she said. "It's hard to find things at first." She looked a little tired but her cheeks were flushed softly and her eyes alive and eager.

"I wish—I ought to wish," floundered Peter, "I mean I *do* wish you were back with Miss Coley! It's an awful mess all around!"

"I'm not going back," she said, small, square chin lifted firmly. "I'm going to stay till things straighten out a little. I don't know as I'd counted on quite so big an adventure, but, after all, I shouldn't mind if it's bigger than I bargained for! Somehow I—I think Mrs. Kilean will come back. She's been under his thumb so long, she'll be lost away from it. If—if he shouldn't get better, it would be terrible for her to come back and find him gone. And if he gets well, she'd still want some one here besides him. I'm going to stay!"

Peter tried to protest, but all the time a warm gladness swept over him because she was not going away. He had already accepted his own job.

That afternoon, being grilled through question after question by the keen-eyed little sheriff, he had some doubts as to his wisdom. It was one thing to have the doctor believe you unquestioningly and another to have to face a man to whom every one was a suspect. The sheriff, however, did not arrest either of them.

He went away in the late afternoon. Mrs. Mulligan had come, a jolly but firm woman with capability in every line of her. She had had a boarding-house and knew the ways of inns. Sim began to talk a little toward night, but it was only a tangled mass of words about money and resentment because no one came to the inn. Several times Peter asked him:

"Who shot you, Sim?"

But Sim only stared at him.

The doctor came twice but there was not much he could do. Mrs. Mulligan, Carey and Peter took turns watching Sim that night.

The days that came after that were queer, dreamlike stretches of hours. For days the big host of Sim's Place hovered on the edge of death. Twice they thought he was gone. Peter and Carey were questioned again and again. Not a trace had been found of Steve or Mary Kilean.

"She didn't even know of it," Carey insisted. "She wouldn't have gone with Steve if she had. He took her away, not knowing. When she finds out, she'll come back. I'm sure she'll come back!"

Jed Ringer was arrested, though protesting vehemently his innocence. It was felt that it looked bad for him.

Life began surely, slowly to creep back into Sim. But not reason, not all his

reason. He sang, weakly, sometimes the old songs—told stories as he used to do. But when they asked him who shot him, he always looked blank, pretended sometimes to sleep. Peter watched him mostly, reading to himself when Sim slept, or talking to Carey. Now that things ran closer to normal, he was bashful again. But the intimacy had been established, by fear, responsibility, or whatever had done it, and it could not be brushed aside now that the great need for it was gone. Peter liked it, was afraid of it; ran away from it, ran back to it. They talked of plays—she was astonishingly informed about plays. Peter decided that her father must have been in some stock company and that Carey had traveled about with him, though she never said so in so many words. Sometimes she caught him up on a quotation, going on with the lines in that vivid, golden voice of hers. They talked sometimes of the inn, of the queer people in it, of how the inn could be made again to a place of beauty.

"I'd like to do it—for Sim's wife," she said once. "I'd like to transform that living-room into the most—welcoming place on the Transit Road. I could, too, with only a few dollars. You see, that first night I came, I said to her, 'The ash tree is so beautiful!' and her voice was so—well, it just made you ache with her! 'But it doesn't match,' she said. 'I've tried, but I can't make it match!' Wouldn't it be fun to make them match, for a kind of greeting to her when she comes back?"

"You're very sure she's coming back," Peter said soberly.

"She will," said Carey.

THAT very night Carey came to him—called him out of Sim's room to the dining-room.

"Peter," she said gravely. Peter warmed to the friendliness she put into his name—no one had ever said "Peter" in just that way before. "Peter—I'm frightened! I—I've heard something queer. And yet I can't believe—I won't believe!"

"Why, what is it, Carey?"

"It's Mary—Sim's wife. I went for a little walk and I met Oley Oleson, that foolish boy. He stopped me and, Peter, he looked just as sane as you or I for a minute! 'They finds Mis' Kilean?' he asked. I shook my head and was going to go on, but he stayed in front of me and then I saw that he wasn't sane—not at all. He began to talk in that weird chanting way he has. 'Oley saw her—Oley saw her,' he said. 'Run down the road—ghost in the moonshine. "Once too often—once too often—once too often," she say. "He did it once too often—once too often—once too often!"' And he kept on saying that 'once too often' till I thought I was going mad. I turned around and ran back here as fast as I could. Peter, you don't think—you don't really think—why, she couldn't have! Even that first night I was telling her to do things instead of being told by her! She might have gone with Steve, but shoot Sim—I tell you, she *couldn't!*"

"We don't know, Carey," Peter said slowly. "We don't know—any one's apt to snap if the load gets too heavy. But I can't think she did it, either. Only there's Jed. We have to think of Jed. Maybe we'll have to tell what Oley said. I'll find him in the morning and see if we can't get more out of him."

She smiled suddenly through her fright.

"Peter," she said, "I don't know as I could stick this adventure out to the end if you weren't here!"

Peter went back to Sim feeling curiously uplifted. Carey liked him—was glad he was here with her! He was still in that queer elation of spirit when he lay down on the cot near Sim. He could not sleep. He kept hearing that golden voice, softly friendly. Suddenly the elation became inspiration. It was there before him in the darkness—his play! His great play—that he had dreamed of writing for so long, that he had begun to fear was never to be written! He got up, shaken. He lit the lamp and went to the dining-room. He had a pencil with him and he found some white wrapping-paper in the pantry.

When Mrs. Mulligan came down to get breakfast he still sat there, his pencil flying across the page.

He had to finish it at odd moments, moments not so inspired; but the tremendous impetus of that first act carried him on. He knew that he was doing something good. But the day he finished it, another event drove the play into the background.

Carey came back from a call at the Home. She came across lots, as it cut off nearly half the way. She was breathless

when she came in, as if she had been running.

"Peter!" she called.

Peter was upstairs but he ran down.

"It's Steve—Steve Grayling. He's here—in the little cabin up in the sugar bush! I saw him plainly! I—I think he's alone. Where's Mary, Peter—*where is Mary?*"

"I don't know," said Peter, his eyes growing hard as he thought of that great giant in there, useless, ill. "But I do know where the sheriff is. I'm going after him—now."

"But that won't find Mary! Peter, I'm going up there—I'm going to ask him!"

"You're not," Peter said firmly.

"Yes—I must. Don't you see, if he knows Sim didn't die, he'll be willing, maybe, to tell something, but if you jump on him with a sheriff, he'll never talk. He's that kind. And you know Sim's just sitting there aching for her! Seems to me it's more important that Sim gets well and Mary comes back than it is to catch Steve. Anyway, I'm going."

"Carey—you can't go!" His voice was stubborn but his eyes were something else altogether. "If you think that's best, I'll go and talk with him myself. But do you think for a minute I'd let you go?" His voice seemed unable to steady itself. Her eyes, which for a second had flamed angrily, grew suddenly wistful and tender.

Her voice was suddenly laughingly shy. "Well," she said, "I—I can't for a minute think of letting you go alone, either!"

"Carey!"

It was just at that shakingly sweet moment that Sim demanded a drink. Peter went to him—went reluctantly. When he came back Carey was not there.

For a moment cold fear swept Peter. He ran to the door and started to cross the back yard to the hill where was the sugar bush. Then he heard voices, close at hand. He stood still. It was Steve Grayling and Carey.

"But you must know—you've got to know!" Carey's voice cut desperately across the darkness. "Who would know? What did you do with her when you took her away that night? If you don't tell, the sheriff'll know where you are within ten minutes!"

"What the devil?" Steve's voice was honestly puzzled. "Mary—*me* take *Mary* away? What you giving me? Mary hates me, always has since I tried to pester her a little after she was married. I went—well, for other reasons. I came back because I couldn't forget you—darn plucky little kid you were that night—I—I—"

Peter ran forward—the early winter twilight suddenly black, jagged with red. He rushed blindly toward the voice, crashed instead into the woodpile. The red died away into solid blackness.

LIKE the gorgeous robe of a Chinese worshiper blazing forth among a counterful of basement-bargain kimonos, May slipped in between the rain-soaked days of April and the sun-parched days of June. Two cherry trees down by the front fence of the inn yard were, by sudden magic, great, sweet bunches of pink. An azalea bush, big as a young tree, glowed out near the well. All along the edge of the low porch, young ferns recently transplanted made a bank of green. Above the old door hung a new signboard, the lettering carved with great care—"At the Sign of the Ash." The ash tree itself stood there at the corner of the inn, majestic, beautiful even without its vivid berries. A new spirit seemed to hover over the gray old place—the flowers by the path, the clipped grass, the new sign, the mended front step—they breathed a welcome.

Inside spring had also forced its way. The battered old chairs, the ragged carpet, the uneven curtains—were gone. The great room had somehow come into its own. The May sunlight came softly through the cream and blue window hangings, touched lovingly the two flat blue bowls of Wandering Jew on the mantel above the great stone fireplace, smiled at the reflection of itself in the small spray painted across the backs of the gray chairs, made softer the gray and yellow rag rugs beneath the three small tables, followed Carey about the room as she came and went, serving softly and deftly. There were six guests at the gray tables. Four were college boys and girls, eager with youth and out to meet the spring half-way.

The other two were men, sitting a little apart by the staircase. On the table before them were a plate of tea biscuits, a cap of buckwheat honey, chicken patties, little balls of butter stamped with an old-fashioned

clover-leaf design, a blue pot of tea. The men were seemingly enjoying the lunch, every mouthful. But they were really not there to eat but to see and hear. They could see what they had come to see—Carey, slim and dark-eyed and pink-cheeked, her dress of blue linen with its boyish white collar making her curiously childlike and appealing. They were waiting now to hear.

Another party came in, made a new pleasant chattering about a table. One of the men by the stairs looked at his watch.

"It's nearly five," he said to his companion. Then he shook his head ruefully. "Magavern's imagination, I'm afraid," he said softly. "She's the right type—but she's not grown up. Miracles don't happen like that, though Magavern really made me think they did when he came to see me. But she couldn't do it—it needs an older, more experienced and poised actress. That girl couldn't have even begun to *live* yet. I'll try Thelma, I guess. It's the play I've been waiting for, for years! Just a flare-up of genius, too—he never wrote a play before—doubt if he'll ever do another as good."

He paused as Peter Magavern came through the dining-room door and walked over to their table. He sat down with them, tense with excitement and some other emotion he could not define.

At just five o'clock a little expectant hush came over the room. The little groups became still as if a custom long established demanded it. Carey came in then, without her tray. She walked over to the fireplace and the men by the stairs felt a little thrill of wonder at the sheer grace of her. She turned and faced them, the blue of her dress bright against the gray stones of the fireplace.

"Tell us 'Captain of the Sally Bell!'" begged one of the college boys.

CAREY smiled at him, friendly-wise, but she shook her head. Then she spoke, and that curious, golden quality that had been so noticeable to Peter the first time he saw her filled the room, amazingly soft and clear.

"I'm going to give the last act of a play today," she said. "It's going to be on the stage soon. It's the story of an old sea-captain longing always for the sea, but forced by circumstances to live in an inland town. He keeps an inn, hates it. His son seems utterly unlike him and the old sea-captain searches always in vain for some sign of his own brave, adventuring spirit in his boy. You can think of the inn, if you like, as this inn—unkempt, gray, desolate, its habitués only a few old checker players and loafers." The golden voice went on with a synopsis of the first acts. The two men by the stairs sat very still and straight, held, as were all of them, by the great compelling beauty of that young voice. Peter was quite white. While all his will was begging her to succeed, his heart kept asking: "If she succeeds, will I have any right to love her?"

She began, suddenly and quietly, upon that last act of Peter's play.

The old sea-captain came alive in his armchair by the inn fire. The boy who wouldn't adventure stood there, laughing whimsically at them all. The girl who loved homes and still places instead of storms at sea, holding them all, through Carey, as she held the boy of the play in her two small hands. Twice Carey sang—once a sea song of the old captain's, once a lullaby of the girl's. Peter saw the man opposite him grip the edge of the table hard.

At last the voice stopped; Carey slipped out between the tables to the kitchen. The hush lasted till she was quite gone. One of the college girls was frankly crying. One of the boys was swallowing hard and pretending to smile. A woman said softly:

"They told me, but I didn't believe it—incredible, a girl waiting on table! Who is she?"

It was a long moment before the man across the table from Peter spoke. He stood up as he did so.

"That miracle has come to pass," he said quietly. "Mr. Magavern, will you take me to her?"

Peter found his hands were shaking. He pushed them down into his pockets.

"You see—she doesn't know—she hasn't the least idea—" he stammered. "It was just part of the ordinary day to her. I didn't want to disappoint her! I—I—"

He led them out through the dining-room. They could see the great form of Sim, sitting in a big chair by the window in his small room, a strangely wistful and lonely figure.

"Carey!" Peter wondered if his voice sounded as queer to Carey as it did to

himself. Carey came and stood in the doorway.

"Come on outside a minute," he said. "This is Mr. Failing—and Mr. Bernardo. They want to talk to you, Carey." There was almost pleading in his shy voice. "Selfish! Selfish!" he called himself as he ached to the lighting of her eyes when he said "Mr. Bernardo." They went out under the ash tree.

"I just said"—Bernardo spoke a little hurriedly—"that it was a miracle—the way you gave that play of Magavern's. I want you to perform that miracle every night in the Largo Theater, beginning next November. You'd have, of course, the part of the girl. You probably know next to nothing about the stage. You'll have to learn—learn fast. It's against all my rules, to take absolute inexperience into the Largo, but I have a hunch that it's time to put aside rules. What do you say?"

Carey's eyes were suddenly glorious. She looked first at Peter, with a great thankfulness shining clear, then her gaze went past them, down the May-sweet road, far away where none of them could follow. Gradually the glory faded to wistful soberness. She turned suddenly to Bernardo.

"I—I'm sorry," she said. "I'd like it better than anything else in the world—because it's Peter's play and all. I—I've been waiting for such a chance—and working for it, all my life. My father told me it would come, but he didn't think yet—not till I was a little older. But I can't come—now. You see, I have my place cut out for me, in there!" She looked toward the inn.

"But," Bernardo made amazed protest, "but other folks can run inns—no one else can be Judith in Magavern's play!"

It was unlike him to plead. Peter thrilled at the tribute. Carey's soberness deepened.

"BUT the play is not begun," she said. "This job is. You probably couldn't just understand, Mr. Bernardo. I came here as a sort of—lark. I called it an adventure. I don't know whether Peter has told you, but only a few hours after I came the adventure turned into a tragedy. Some one tried to murder the innkeeper, and his wife and a man who loved her disappeared. It was left to us—to care for Sim Kilean and to run the inn. It was a place like the inn of Peter's play, probably popular in other days, but gone to seed, desolate and ugly now. It crushed Sim's wife and she ran away from it. But she had always wanted things different—she wanted to make the rest of the inn match this ash tree. You've never seen the tree in the fall!

"I thought she'd come back. I think so yet. And I set out to make the inn match the tree. I thought it would be something for her to come back to, so that she could sort of begin life over again. It wasn't that Sim didn't care for her; we've found that out. But he married her knowing she loved Steve Grayling—he's the man we thought shot Sim. Sim couldn't forget it. It made a brute out of him—he wanted to hurt her as she'd hurt him. The madness would come over him and turn him into a bully when he least expected it.

"He pretended to hire me to stop gossip, but he really did it to help her—only he couldn't tell her so. He could tell her now, I think. Peter and I have made the inn over. It's beginning to succeed. But I don't feel my job's done till Mary Kilean comes back. Maybe she won't come—some folks think she won't. We can't find her—nor Steve Grayling—nor the half-wit who knew something about it. It looks bad, but I *know* she didn't shoot him—that some day she'll come back to him." She looked wistfully up at Bernardo.

"Do you think that's foolish?" she begged. "I suppose you'll say some one else would do as well, to greet her, but it wouldn't be the same. I know how she's going to feel—I know what I want to say to her. I—I can't seem to help it. My father always made me finish things, and now it's part of me!"

Her dark eyes suddenly looked away from them as if she were ashamed of the tears there. The rest were strangely silent.

"Father would have liked me to work for you," she said after a long, wistful moment. "Maybe—some day—" She paused again, then went on with sudden girlish interest. "You look like Father's picture of you," she said. "Only—only *kinder!*"

"Your father—do I know him?" Bernardo questioned with eager quickness.

"You did. He—he's gone now. John Deane—"

"John Deane!" Bernardo and the others made incredulous ejaculation. "*John Deane!*"

That eager face of the man who was always a boy, the man who had for a generation spelled romance to thousands upon thousands of romance-hungry hearts, was suddenly there in the eyes of their minds. His daughter—this slim child of genius! It was Bernardo who broke the silence.

"We'll produce the play—when your job's done here," he said gravely.

It was not till after the dishes were put away for the night that Peter found a chance to talk to Carey again alone. After supper he always read aloud to Sim for an hour. Sim sat up days now, sometimes walked about the house a little, but it had taken an incredibly long time for his recuperation. If he had not had such superb vitality he might not have got better at all. He didn't care—he didn't want to get better. His memory for most things had come back to him, but of the night when he had been shot he remembered nothing. The first time that hope crept into his eyes was when Carey told him that Mary was not with Steve.

After that he seemed to have a desire to live. He began to take an interest in the transformation of the inn. He even asked them to bring down the little ship from his bedroom and put it on the mantel. It was a beautiful little model and its presence spread romance over the old room. He watched out of the window down the road for hours each day. He usually went to bed right after his hour of reading but on this night he said he wanted to stay up a little while longer. It was still light and he sat by the open window where the May-sweet breezes swept in to him.

Carey, her work done, came out and sat on the front step. She was tired and the talk with Bernardo had taken something out of her. It had been such an opportunity—a fairy dream come true. And, after all, why had she refused it? What if Mary should never come? Why should she feel under the slightest obligation to Sim or Mary? Why couldn't the inn go on just the same without her? But, though she couldn't answer all the questions rushing through her mind, she knew she couldn't go. And Peter—was Peter disappointed in her, too? That, she confessed to herself, was what hurt most. Peter had done so much for her—and now she was hurting Peter! Then, there beside her, was Peter. She smiled at him, but her smile was close to tears.

"CAREY," he said softly, "don't look like that! I can't bear it! Did you think I'd mind—about the play? Why, Carey—you're doing something beautiful—only, it's a sacrifice—"

Her eyes suddenly glowed.

"Oh, no, it isn't a sacrifice—not if *you* don't mind, Peter! I—I was afraid!"

"Afraid of *me*, Carey?"

She did not answer, only smiled at him, but there was in that smile so much of trust and friendliness and sweetness that Peter, shy, afraid-of-folks Peter, suddenly took courage.

"Carey," he said softly, "I know you're a genius—I know I haven't really any right—only—oh, Carey, do you remember the night you fell asleep watching beside Sim, and I carried you out to the couch? You were so little and so brave and so—so sweet—I began to want you then. And now I want you—want you—love you till it seems as though I can't bear it if you don't want me a little bit, too! I—I'm not big enough for you, but I love you, Carey! It seemed to me I'd been lonesome all my life, till you came. Oh—*Carey!*"

Her eyes, meeting his, were so gloriously sweet with promises that something tightened around Peter's lonely heart. Then, of a sudden, she was away from him. She stood up.

"Oh, Peter!" she cried, a little incredulously. "Peter—*Peter*—it's *Mary!*"

She sped down the path like a bird. Down the road came a little woman with a suitcase, stumbling in her haste. Carey met her at the gate, took the suitcase from her, kissed her as if she'd known her always. Peter, going to meet them, wondered how Carey had known her. She was the same—and yet so different. She had on a gray-blue tweed suit and a hat with a blue feather that matched her eyes. Her hair fluffed out girlishly about her face. But her eyes were frightened.

"Tell me," she begged. "Tell me—is Sim—"

"Sim's all right," Carey interrupted. "Or he will be when he sees you! Oh, Mrs. Kilean, it's like a miracle—that you've come tonight! Wait! Don't go in—I'll have to tell you about things so you won't frighten him. Sit down here!"

"But he—*I want to see Sim!*"

"Yes." Carey was suddenly older and very gentle. "Yes, you shall see him. But you must know first about his being—hurt. Did you know he was hurt?"

"This morning."

Carey lifted triumphant eyes to Peter.

"I told them all you didn't know!" she exclaimed. "But, you see, after he'd quarreled with Steve, it—it looked queer. And Steve went away that night too. After what Jed Ringer said, folks thought you went together. Then Steve came back and said he hadn't seen you. It was all so queer and tangled up! One night the half-wit"—Mary lifted her head quickly—"Oley Oleson, I met him and he'd seen you go. He said you kept saying, 'He did it once too often—once too often—once too often!' But I knew—even after that, that you didn't do it! They couldn't make out any case against Jed, or I'd have had to tell that. You see, Sim couldn't remember—he can't even remember now! We have hunted for you everywhere!"

"I—I was only in Jarvis City," Mary said. "I—I changed my name, but I didn't really mean to hide. I—I couldn't stand it, that was all. I felt as though I were being crushed to death. He didn't care and he was so—cruel! And that night—before them all! So I ran away. I thought I'd make something of myself, something big, and then I'd come back and laugh at him like he did at me. Only I guess I really wanted to be big so he'd—care—again. I got a place in the General Hospital and I liked it. I felt free and happy. I got me some clothes and I went places. I got to thinking I'd never come back—that all that was so much better than this old run-down place that I'd be foolish to come back to it.

"BUT last night Oley came. I was on night duty. He'd been hurt, hurt bad, by an automobile. Wasn't it queer he should be brought to me? He'd been looking for me, ever since I went away, I guess. I used to feed him and give him little chores to do and he always followed me around like a big dog. He—he told me about Sim. He didn't seem foolish any more—only kind of lost—maybe his accident did something to his poor head. He told me he went back to the house that night after he saw me running away and went up to Sim's room and got a gun. He thought Sim had hurt me and he shot him. Well, when Oley said that, all that free happy feeling was gone, and all I could think of was getting back here to Sim. Maybe he won't want me—but I had to come. Oley—died!"

Carey put out a hand steadyingly.

"No—don't go yet. You think Sim doesn't care. He does, Mrs. Kilean. He always has! He was just jealous of Steve Grayling! It made him want to hurt you because you hurt him so. But he loved you—he sits by the window all day long, watching for you!"

Not Carey—not any one in all the world could have kept her then! But in the doorway she paused for one bewildered moment of readjustment.

"Why—it—*matches!*" she said in a whisper.

Peter ached at the pathos of joy in that whisper.

"He's in there," Carey said gently.

There was an instant's silence as Mary stood in the doorway of the little bedroom. Then there was a choked cry of wonder and joy. Carey and Peter fled outside. It was not their moment.

"And some folks think that romance and adventure and love are—*dead!*" Carey said softly, out under the ash tree.

"They can't die while girls like you live."

"Oh—*Peter!* And, Peter, now we can do it—your play!"

"*We?*"

She sobered, but a dimple persisted.

"Why, I thought—"

"Carey, do you mean—do you mean that it'll always be 'we'—that you—that you love me?"

For a long moment they were still with the wonder of it—that there in the old tumble-down inn, where Peter had come for peace and Carey had come for an every-day sort of adventure, should come to them the biggest and best adventure of all!

"Yes, Peter," she said simply. "I mean that!"

The Uncertain Quantity

Demonstrating That Even a Flapper May Serve a Good Purpose. A Lightly Written Story with Both Charm and Emotional Depth

By Edwina Levin MacDonald

MRS. JAMES DARCY WARREN submitted her slim form to the sagging depths of her hooded beach chair as she submitted to all the conditions of her life. One came to Palm Beach for the sunshine, and must, therefore, take it for an hour each morning. So one took, year in and year out, certain things at certain hours, according to the season—New York, Newport, Paris, Palm Beach, moving every few weeks to but another routine.

Caring neither for the bathing nor for the pose of bather, she wore a sport costume of rough oyster-white silk that brought out the rich olive tints of her skin, the satiny sheen of her black hair, and deepened the violet dusk of her large bored eyes.

Removed, as she was, from those other and more gregarious women who "took the sun" in the shade of the hooded chairs, or under beach umbrellas that had the look of enormous parti-colored mushrooms springing from the yellow sand in numbers as amazing as their hues were many, she let her mind drift with her gaze; indolent, formless, beneath a sky of robin's-egg blue, from which a golden gauze depended, in fluttering iridescence, to a sea of liquid jade.

Beyond the farthermost of its surges, and well inside the Gulf Stream, which cuts a blackish line through pastel waters, her husband's yacht lay at anchor, a small palace, also one of the details of usual life, and, therefore, stirring in Pamela Warren neither interest nor passing attention.

"Well, Pam, how's the sun-bath?" A big blond man in a bathing suit plumped himself down at her side, and began massaging his legs with sand.

James Darcy Warren was a tall man, a little too heavy for muscular display, but easily escaping overweight. He had a rough crop of sandy hair, an aggressive nose, a wide smile, and clear blue eyes that drew men by their directness, and women by the merry light in them. Good-looking, in a rugged, wholesome way, having the assured manner of the successful man, he was, yet, entirely lacking in the heavy thoughtfulness which seems to mark accumulative men.

If, as often it did, his mind dipped beneath bromidic life to bring up a succulent morsel of thought, he would hastily avail himself of quotation marks, with the air of a small boy who, fearing to lose caste because of his fine clothes, turns his pockets inside-out to prove that he is just a common fellow.

"Pat is seeing too much of Don Talbott," Pamela said, ignoring the question which he put to her every morning on his way from the bath-house to the water.

Drawing his knees within the circle of his arms, Warren followed the direction of his wife's gaze up the beach to a clump of coconut palms, their slender naked bodies bowing grievously to the sea, their plume-like heads, appearing as tall green fans from ancient Egypt, set against a wide blue canvas. Beyond them, the vibrant figures of a man and girl were etched upon the white-hot light. A limp skirt fluttered like an ivory-colored flag about the girl's feet; her jacket was a torch of oriental splendor. She was evidently feeding a colony of gulls,

for every time her arm swung out a feathered war occurred on the sand.

"Great kid," Warren murmured. "So alive."

"He is distressingly attractive," continued Pamela; "looks like a handsome young bandit in modern dress. And I'm afraid Pat has a streak of her mother's romanticism. Poor Emma, always struggling, and as she says, hanging on by a cuff-link."

"Shouldn't think she'd fancy being called a cuff-link," Warren grinned. "Anyway," he went on after a silence, "in spite of her romanticism, it occurs to me that there's no happier woman in our circle, or on its fringes, than Emma; which may prove that happiness hangs by a cuff-link," he finished with a quizzical grin. His eyes lighted on a woman of huge dimensions standing fearfully at the thin edge of the tide. "Why will a woman like Mrs. Dorrance, who never gets wet above the ankles, turn loose gobs of fat on a helpless public?"

Pamela's immobile hands, lying half in sunlight, half in shade, moved in a sudden gesture of impatience. "Emma has kept her interest in things, if that's what you mean. But as for being contented—perhaps it is the whip of poverty that has kept her from becoming—bored."

Had she been looking at her husband, she might have discerned a bleak shade in swift passage across the clear mirror of his face. His voice was casual. "I didn't have contentment in mind, but happiness."

"What's the difference?" she asked idly.

Warren frowningly dug his toes into the sand. "Contentment is a disintegrating garment on a dead man's shoulders. Happiness, on the other hand, is a winged mantle worn only by runners." He looked up with his inside-out expression. "Rum thing to say. I read it in the funny sheet." With a coltish bound he came to his feet. "Guess I'll spear the water."

Pamela watched him trot into the surf and lose himself on a head dive into the breakers.

FOURTEEN years ago Pamela St. John, the most beautiful débutante of the season, having an enormous fortune in her own right, had converted society into a collection of exclamation points by rejecting a title to marry Jimmie Warren, a gay youngster who had nothing to offer her but himself, and a little matter of a fortune no greater than her own. Tumultuously in love, she had married him against beleaguering opposition.

By slow degrees it had come to her that there was a disturbing sameness about Jimmie's quizzical conversation; his once thrilling tricks of speech and gesture; his spurts of philosophy enclosed in quotation marks. Even his love-making was like a lesson memorized through much repeating.

Shamed and shocked by her critical attitude, she had argued with herself. What difference did it make if she knew all the reaches of her husband's soul? Why should she expect mystery and surprise? Was he not the more dependable that this was not so? And perhaps she didn't really know all that lay behind his bland lightness of manner. She strove to prove this last to herself by trying to rouse him to some unexpected reaction. But he would not react, could not. For he had been created inside out.

She grew bored, tried to settle to the routine as so many of her friends had done.

Pamela Warren, however, had but one place in life—to love and be loved in return. As she had cast aside a title and high prestige for love, so, had she been poor, would she have cast aside wealth or career. Unfortunately gifted with intellect as well as emotionalism, she was ruled by them in reverse order. Such women, overwhelmed by their hearts, are in its first pause, set upon by wolfish minds. Then, as in Pamela's case, comes the winter of famine.

Had she been less fine, less proud, she would have found fuel at hand to feed the insistent demand of her. As it was, she gave herself up to life from which the first element was missing.

"THESE Southern boys make me sick!" A small girlish figure in a jacket of violent colors and an ivory-white skirt that flapped about red-trimmed white shoes plumped into the sand. A flushed childish face, with blue eyes emitting sparks, was lifted to Mrs. Warren. "They aren't fit for the society of a civilized horse. I'm talking about one Southern man in particular, named Don Talbott!" she raged, snatching her hat from a blond bob that was tucked carefully under a net to give it the

effect of being "put up." From her ears, long earrings depended. "He said any blond girl who rouged her cheeks and wore red earrings and a jacket like this ought to be exported."

"He probably said 'deported,'" smiled Mrs. Warren.

"Same thing. Shipped out. Aunt Pam, is this jacket unbecoming to me?"

Pamela Warren, whom Patricia Laurence called "Aunt Pam," by virtue of a long-standing friendship for her mother, inspected the saucy face with its generous mouth, its ungenerous and tip-tilted nose, its little pointed chin and widely spaced blue eyes. "At your age, nothing can be actually unbecoming," she said with indolent amusement. "Being part Spanish, Don probably was pained by bizarre colors on a Dresden shepherdess."

"I don't care. I hate his soul!" Patricia flung her hat at a vagrant gull picketing the sand in her vicinity.

"A shocking thing to do, Pat dear." A whimsical interest, and at the same time a vague uneasiness, appeared in the lovely bored face of the woman. "But since you feel that way about him it spares me the trouble of reminding you that I didn't bring you down here to play around with good-looking boys of no particular position. You know what a struggle your mother has had. A few weeks at Newport occasionally; never anywhere else. And now that you have made your début, she must give up even that till you are safely married."

"But Milly Bruster says Don and his father have a cigar plantation or something over in Tampa," declared Pat, her anger suddenly dissipated. "And it's huge. And Don says there's no sense in having more money than you can spend to have a whale of a good time."

Mrs. Warren flicked a minute spider from her skirt before answering. "I suspect the Southerner's viewpoint of a 'whale of a good time,' is quite different from ours. And I'm afraid the cigar plantation, however huge, would never grow enough cigars to keep you as you'd like—"

"Oh, I suppose not," interrupted Pat with the rudeness of youth. "But look at the layout around these diggings." Her indignant gaze swept the beach on which briefly clothed men sprawled in the sun-glare, athletic, attenuated and affluent of body, their damp legs and suits encrusted in satisfying grime.

"Aunt Pam, I want the man I marry to be a *little* bit interesting, so I'll have a *chance* of loving him. There are some peachy married men here," she went on, her head cocked to one side with the air of a meditating bird. "And of course, nobody marries for keeps these days."

She took a bit of bread from her pocket and threw it from her. Instantly a colony of gulls circling over the water swooped down for it. "I s'pose since you and Mama are set on my marrying for money, and I'm set on marrying somebody I can like, I'll just have to take somebody's husband. All the boys here are blots on the scenery."

"You found Freddy Courtland interesting at first."

"That was before I found out all his conversation was in his feet," gloomed Pat. "You can't keep a man playing football all the time. It isn't done—at dinner, for instance."

"FOOTBALL or funny sheet, it wears on one just the same," sighed Mrs. Warren. "I don't understand it, Pat dear. God gave the greater part of the world four seasons, with an infinite variety of interest. But to each man, He gave a single set of tricks. And no matter how thrilling in the beginning, they grow stale. It's like reading a book without suspense. No matter how charmed you may be at first with the words, a sustained effort demands little surprises, little moments of not knowing what's going to happen."

She lifted her hand in a gesture that included the spreading and colorful scene. "Take even this gay, dependable Palm Beach—we find it enchanting for six or eight weeks, but I sometimes wonder how it is with the people who have it fifty-two weeks in the year."

Patricia for once was stricken speechless. She sat staring in round-eyed amazement at the beautiful dark profile, the remoteness and boredom of the drifting gaze.

"Love is a beautiful thing," the woman continued musingly, "if one could hold it; but when one comes to know every page of the book, one gets bored. Then, if one has made sacrifices—and there's nothing else—" She turned suddenly to the girl with her charming smile. "I've preached you quite

a sermon, my dear, on love and marriage. My first attempt, I assure you."

Pat's small body was limp. Her hands lay idle in her lap. She sighed deeply. "Aunt Pam," she said, speaking with a deliberation new to her, "if any other woman said to me what you have just said, and if her husband were Mr. Warren, or as attractive and—eligible as Mr. Warren, I'd vamp him away from her."

Mrs. Warren laughed negligently. "It would no doubt amuse me to see how Jimmie would react to a flapper."

Rising with an absurd assumption of dignity, Pat gazed down at the smiling woman between narrowed lids. "My dear Mrs. Warren, you are evidently unaware of the fact that the flappers have all grown up. They are now womanettes, and are very deadly." Her expression changing, she moved around in front of Mrs. Warren and leaned on her, knees against knees. "Aunt Pam, what would you do if Mr. Warren fell for somebody else? Would you be like all the other bored married women—a pig in the manger?"

"Don't be absurd, Pat."

"Why is it so absurd? Even Palm Beach gets an attack of cold sometimes. What would you do?"

"If Jimmie ever wanted another woman, I would simply step out," Mrs. Warren said coldly. "However," she added, her lightness returning, "I can't be party, angel child, to your obvious designs on the handsome person and eligible bank account of my husband, because I mustn't let you spoil your matrimonial chances."

Patricia laughed merrily. "Oh, Aunt Pam! You are too naïve. Don't you know that if a girl can manage to get herself talked about these days, all the men are on her neck? Oh!" she cried, catching sight of Warren, who was wading in. "Don't come in, Mr. Warren! Wait for me!" She sped away to the bath-house.

Warren, grinning broadly, waded ashore and, sitting down beside his wife, began covering his legs with sand with the absorbed attention of a small boy engaged in castle building, while he waited for Pat.

AT A small table on that side of the tea pavilion giving on the sea, but screened from its glare by strange vines and palms as various as were their native shores, Mrs. James Darcy Warren, whose exotic beauty and indolent charm are known to two continents, sat with her husband, her slim hands moving among the tea-things; talking lightly, inconsequentially; torn by such agony as a man knows, who, accepting the breath of life for long years with unconcern, maybe with bored indifference, finds it suddenly cut off.

Her chair was so placed that it commanded a view of the park gardens—well-groomed lawns, yielding at brief intervals to rampant uprisings of broad leathery-leaved vegetation aflame with tubular bloom—huge bells of red, yellow, purple and blue, nodding above walks that wound with the tortuous meandering of sportive brooks toward the veranda-girdled hotel, which pushes its gables above a smother of trees curious and improbable; the whole tropic tangle being pierced by palms supporting great clusters of coconuts sometimes a hundred feet in the air—blobs of green and brown against the blue translucence of a sky as innocent of cloud speck as Palm Beach is innocent of sordid care.

"Where's Pat?" asked Warren, breaking in on something his wife was saying about the music.

Mrs. Warren felt suffocated. Nausea unspeakable swept her, but she did not lift the veil of her heavy-lidded eyes. "Dressing, I think. Waiter, will you bring us another pot of water?" She dropped a slice of lemon in a cup of tea and passed it to Warren.

Three weeks had passed since her talk with Pat on the beach—three unbelievable weeks of bleeding humiliation and despair; three weeks in which she had learned with amazement that she knew neither the reaches of her husband's heart, nor those of her own.

"You know I don't take lemon, Pam," Warren was protesting in surprise.

She looked up, an indolent smile curving her lips. "I should after fourteen years. The fact is, I—wasn't thinking of what I was doing. There's Pat now."

His eyes followed hers to a veranda thrust out from the hotel like a gigantic finger pointing toward the sea, high above and paralleling the pavilion. Midway between the veranda and the ground, Pat hesitated like a stage star pausing on a stairway to give her audience full benefit of the picture she made.

A picture indeed, in an afternoon frock of pale rose organdy, her little body rising like the pistil of a flower from the center of her long voluminous skirts, her bobbed head a whorl of tightly curled gold, tucked carefully up under a net. Long coral earrings, like graduated dewdrops taking on the vivid color of her cheeks, quivered against the column of her throat, giving her the look of some quaint beauty of long ago. A picture of impertinent, self-assured girlhood, on whose childish face sat the sophistication of the ages.

They all saw her, those lotus-eaters of many lands. Well-bred eyes turned swiftly yet furtively to the Warren table; or were held determinedly away. A few smiled in open malice, while over the whole gathering ran an electric thrill; a feel of silence; then a slight increase of gaiety.

At the foot of the steps a young man waited, his boyish form belligerently upright, his dark face unsmiling. After her fluttering and nicely timed pause, Pat descended, nodding with the sweet and casual patronage of a princess to the young man. Without further encouragement, he followed her to Mrs. Warren's table, and sat down in glowering silence.

"Come on, Jimmie! This music is too good to waste," Pat cried, her coral earrings shivering to her joyous excitement. She had long since dropped the formal "Mr. Warren."

Warren pushed his chair back. "Pam, do you want—" he began.

"You don't care if he dances first with me, do you, Aunt Pam?" pouted Pat.

Pamela Warren turned carelessly to her husband, who still hesitated. "Run along, Jimmie, and dance with her. Can't you see the child's feet are on fire?"

He followed Pat with a grin, and they were soon lost in the maze of whirling couples. Don Talbott's face was pale with anger.

"I never saw a child who was so insane about dancing," said Mrs. Warren, pouring a cup of tea for the boy who sat in stiff silence. Her smile was indulgent, her manner that of the gracious hostess whose chief concern is her guest.

"Mrs. Warren, do you care to dance this?" he asked bitterly.

"Not particularly, Don; but if you want to—"

"I don't!" His tone was violent.

"Then we won't," she said with a soft laugh. But a needle thrust caught at her heart. She had known for days that this passionate son of a Spanish mother might explode at any moment and start the whole winter colony snickering. He had followed Pat about like a love-sick poodle whose mistress has forgotten his existence.

SHE made her voice steady. "Do you take lemon, Don?"

"I don't want any tea. Mrs. Warren, how long are you going to let this go on?"

Her heart seemed all at once to stop. "I think, after all, I'd like to dance this," she said with a bland smile. "The music is rather good."

"I want to talk to you," he said doggedly, but rose with her.

She linked her hand in his arm, her face a mirror of light banter. "And this is no place to talk," she whispered. In louder tones she added: "When the dance is over, if you care to, you may act as my cavalier for a stroll through the grounds. The air is rather humid, don't you think? Pat can pour fresh tea for herself and Jimmie."

The boy, though a marvelous dancer, seemed unable to keep step. He made no effort to answer Mrs. Warren's bright flow of small talk. Several times they passed Warren and Pat, Warren's big sandy head down-bent, smiling into the small reckless face held up to him, now shy, now pouting or merry, ever changing and vivacious.

"They have no sense of decency even," thought Pamela, with bitterness. But she always smiled at them as they passed. Don glowered, openly. They, on their side, were so absorbed in each other that they saw neither Pamela's smiles nor Don's black glances.

"We might slip out now," said the woman as they swung near the pavilion gate.

Outside, she took his arm in sheer weakness. The horrible pound-pound within her bosom that gave her no rest, and which she sometimes thought must soon wear her heart out by sheer overwork, was pushing at her breath so that she talked with difficulty. She dreaded the impending scene with the boy.

She understood his impetuous nature the better because of her own impetuous girlhood. But years had taught her to smile

while the heart broke; to talk of gay, inconsequential things while every nerve in her body pulled to the strain of it.

When they were some distance from the hotel, she turned into a by-path, shut off by dense growth from the main road. "This is my favorite spot," she said, seating herself on a slight rise of ground above which a majestic silk cotton tree lifted a canopy of scarlet bloom. "The color is becoming, and it is dry and secluded. Just the place for serious conversation."

She spoke frivolously, inviting him with a languid gesture to be seated.

"I can't sit down. I'd blow up." Then he sat down. "Mrs. Warren, I'd feel like a cad, speaking to you," he began hotly, "if it weren't that I know you know—Mrs. Warren, have you anything against me? I mean as a husband for Pat."

Her eyes fell, and a slow shamed color dyed her pale cheeks as she thought of the tremendous change that had taken place in her attitude toward him in the last three weeks. Before, she had brushed him aside as the son of a cigar manufacturer of, perhaps, moderate means—an attractive boy, but not for Pat. Now she regarded him with emotions as intense as they were contradictory. He stood for her highest hope and her deepest fear—hope that he might save her from this devastating pain, and fear that in saving her he might wreck Jimmie's happiness.

And this fear for Jimmie redeemed her from utter self-contempt, from the blight of feeling that she was indeed a dog in the manger whose love was merely self-love, blended of pride and petty vanity.

"I know I'm not a rich man, as compared to—Warren," Don went on, misinterpreting her hesitation. "We don't keep up a dozen establishments and move every few weeks to one or the other of them; but I can give my wife one rather pretentious home, maybe two, and let her have her clothes made in New York and Paris and—"

"I know. Pat told me that you had a cigar plantation."

A blank expression swept the tumult from his face. Then he laughed suddenly. And she liked him because he could laugh even in the midst of evident suffering. "She *is* a little simp—in some ways," he said, adding seriously, "and in others, she's as wise as—as—"

"As all the generations of up-reaching women could make her," she finished for him.

"BUT I love her," he broke out, his vehemence returning. "My God, Mrs. Warren, I love her! And she—" He choked, looked aside, and with a shamed gesture put his hands over his face, only to tear them instantly away. There were boyish tears in his soft brown eyes. "Damn it, I'm not a man, or I wouldn't— My mother is of Latin descent, Mrs. Warren, and I'm like her. I know no woman can understand—"

She put out her hand, closing it firmly over one of his. "I'm not of Latin descent, Don, but I understand. I was like you when I was your age."

He caught her hand in both of his, leaning eagerly toward her. "You aren't against me. Mrs. Warren, why don't you put a stop to it before it goes—too far? She did like me at first. I know it. Now she treats me like a piece of dirt in the road. Her head is turned by his money. She can't love him. If he wasn't an old fool he'd know it. Not that forty is old," he said with a sudden painful blush.

The indolent mask had dropped over her face. "Of whom are you speaking, Don? Surely, you aren't all worked up over Pat's and Jimmie's friendship? Why, Jimmie has known Pat from a baby!"

A rush of angry blood darkened the boy's pale face. "My God! Mrs. Warren, don't pretend! Even if you don't care for yourself, you're a woman. Feel this." He snatched up her hand and pressed it against the heavy pounding of his heart. "It goes like that night and day. I can't sleep for it. I can't tell you when I've eaten last. I get hungry, and then when I try to eat, a glass of milk is as much as I can get down. I turn sick at my stomach, and my throat closes up tight. I'm sick—like that all the time." He let go her hand, his dark eyes pleading for her help.

She felt no inclination to smile at his forthrightness. He had described her own suffering too accurately. Only, she had forced the food down—choked it down, while she kept the silken thread of conversation spinning betwixt herself, her husband and Pat. Her compassion swept her training aside.

"All right, Don, I won't—pretend," she said in a low voice. "You see, I'm trained not to speak of things that—hurt. It isn't that I don't care—but what can I do? Pack Pat off home, and set the whole colony laughing at me for getting jealous of a flapper?"

"No, don't send her home," he put in hastily. "Just tell them both where they get off. They know that in the end the whole thing is up to you. He can't divorce you just because he's lost his head over another woman. All you've got to do to put a stop to it is to have it out with them."

She began picking at the slim trunk of a young gumbo-limbo striving up beneath the shade in process of eternal shedding of its snakelike skin.

"The trouble is, Don, I am not sure that I want to put a stop to it. You see," she added hastily as he would have spoken, "more than I want to be happy myself, I want Jimmie to be happy. If Pat is the woman to make him happy I—want him to have her."

"Well, I don't. I wish to God we lived in the days when men kidnaped women and married them out of hand. I love her so much that I'd take her any way I could get her."

"Love is more selfish when one is—young," she sighed. "Have you told Pat how you feel?"

"She won't give me a chance."

"But at first?"

A flush mantled his face and his eyes fell. "I—kissed her. But I didn't tell her I loved her. You see, I've played around with girls—some, and felt thrilled and all that, but it never lasted. How was I to know that this was the real thing?"

"Do you know it now?"

"If I thought there was anything worse to come, I'd shoot myself straight off!"

She rose, accepting his quickly proffered hand.

"Well, as I see it, you are the only one who can do anything. I can't—or won't. I'm not sure that I want you to. But there's this: If you talk to her as you've talked to me—and she can hear you without a stir of warmth—then the only decent thing for you to do is to get yourself out of the way. And the only decent thing for me to do is—wait. Perhaps also get out."

"Mrs. Warren," he cried, crushing her hand in both his, "you are a real fellow. And I'll put my fate to the test tonight, sometime during the dance, if I have to snatch her away from Warren right in the ballroom."

WARREN claimed the first dance with Pamela. When it was over, he stood talking with her, his eyes roving about the ballroom. Not until the musicians were getting ready for the next number did he ask to see her program. She had purposely kept every fourth dance open. He glanced at it.

"You can keep those open for me, if you like," he said. The music started. "If you'll excuse me, I have this dance with Pat. Here's your partner now. Hello, Stacy." He hurried away.

A tall gangling youth touched Stacy on the shoulder as he was leading Pamela out on the floor. "Just a minute, old bean. Mrs. Warren, may I—" He held out his hand for her program.

"I had saved those for Jimmie," she smiled, "but it isn't good form to dance too much with one's husband. Take as many as you like." He promptly filled her program.

When the fourth dance started Warren made his way over to her. "All taken, old dear," she said carelessly. "Sorry."

The gangling youth came to claim her, and she moved away. During the dance she noticed Jimmie leaning against a pillar. So he had really taken note of the openings she had left, and had kept the dance open for her. At least he could be depended upon not to neglect her openly, she thought, bitterly.

He danced the fifth with Pat. Don had not moved from the embrasure of a palm-embowered window since his first ineffectual attempt to obtain a dance from Pat, who had evidently had her program filled before she entered the ballroom. Watching him, Pamela knew that he was on the point of breaking. She was not surprised at the close of the dance, when Jimmie and Pat strolled out to a side veranda, to see Don follow them.

She felt faint. The blood roared in her ears so that she could not hear what her partner was saying. "Will you excuse me?" she asked. "I think I'll run up to my room and get a shawl. I feel a slight chill." It

was a sweltering night, and she saw a look of surprise dawn in the man's face; but she did not wait for him to speak.

She fled up the stairs to her room, and snatching a long cape of black crêpe from the closet, ran down the long hall to a back stairway. She had to see, even if she could not hear, what took place on that balcony. Would the boy make a scene and humiliate them all? He was desperate enough to do anything. Or would Jimmie, seeing how things were, succeed in getting him out in the grounds, out of sight and hearing? She felt that she could endure anything, if only they didn't come to an open rupture.

Grateful for the moonless blackness outside, she dodged through the shrubbery. The veranda was bright as day; but the three she sought were not among them. So great was her relief that her knees gave and she sank down on the turf in the shadow of a spreading oleander, near the path that led from the veranda. Thank God Jimmie knew how to handle men. She heard voices approaching; but she could not make out the figures. Suddenly, she heard Pat's light laugh followed by running feet. Now she made out Pat's white dress and the blur of a man's shirt front.

He caught her not more than a yard from where Pamela huddled among the branches of the oleander.

"You'll laugh at me, will you?" There were sounds of a struggle; and silence—a long silence. Then: "Now, you little devil, you've made a fool of me just as long as you're going to. You know very well what I've been trying to get you alone for, and you are going to give me my answer tonight. Will you marry me? Or won't you? I feel as if the only pleasure I could get out of life would be to kill you, so nobody else could have you, and then end my own misery."

"Well, if I've got to give you my answer tonight," came Pat's light voice, "and as I'd rather not be killed, I'll marry you."

Instantly his tones became pleading. "Oh, Pat! Honey, don't you love me a little?"

"Of course, silly. I'm crazy about you."

"Then why have you been playing with that old fool?" he demanded indignantly.

"Several reasons. One was that if I hadn't played around with him, you would have played around with me all season, spoiled all my other chances, and let me go home without saying a word. You were so conceited, and had ideas of not wanting to marry until you were an old thing of twenty-five. Another reason is that if I had played around with you much longer, Aunt Pam would have packed me off home. And by the time you'd have waked up, she would have carried me off to Paris—"

"You adorable angel!"

Silence reigned.

Pamela burned with sudden anger.

So the selfish little trickster had used poor old Jimmie as a cudgel with which to club Don and her into line, with never a thought of the pain she might bring to him, the suffering and humiliation to her.

She crawled around under the low branches of the oleander. When well behind its broad screen she stood up shakily and, circling far out, came back to the hotel, going directly up to her room.

TRAINING had fallen from her and the woman stood stark in primitive emotions that cared not for the whispers, the shrugs and smiles that her continued absence from the ballroom would occasion, following as it did the exit of her husband and Pat. She couldn't go back to watch Pat and Don appear in all their proud self-conscious joy, their young cruelty. Her fingers, her very arms, ached with a physical ache to shake Pat's childish body until all the concentrated hurt of Jimmie and herself should be transmuted to screams of pain and terror under her violence. That she could do such a thing to Jimmie! Without a thought! Without a care!

Where was Jimmie? How had they got rid of him? But of course he, upon seeing the boy's face, had probably just walked away, leaving them together to prevent a scene.

Her maid being downstairs watching the dancers from the outside, she tore herself out of her gown; jerking, ripping the fragile thing apart in the fury that possessed her. With fingers that shook she got into her nightgown, and taking down her hair tried to braid it; gave it up. She slipped into bed with the haste of a child who hopes thus to escape a switching.

She lay down, but sat up immediately. Oh, the cruelty of youth! Curiously, she did not think of the advantage that had accrued to herself; but of the tremendous hurt in

store for Jimmie. For, absurd though it was for a man of his age, there could be no doubt that he was infatuated with Pat, and what she, Pamela, had suffered, what Don had suffered, Jimmie must now suffer —and she must suffer with him. She beat one clenched fist into her open palm till it ached. If she could only cry! But of course she mustn't, even if she could. Jimmie might come up looking for her. And she —she who ached in every fiber of her for him, must tell him—tonight, so that he should not hear it for the first time under unsympathetic eyes.

At last she heard him enter his room. He did not come to look for her. He had not even missed her. Perhaps he had seen the flag of happiness in their faces and had sneaked up to his room to be alone. She tried to respect his wish. But she could not. She could not bear to think of him fighting it out alone. She wanted to assure him of her sympathy.

She got up and, turning on her light, hurried tremblingly into her negligee and slippers.

Warren, who was standing at an open window, his back to the room, wheeled as his door opened. She stood hesitantly in the doorway, almost startling in the beauty of her negligee of silver tissue over rose; her long black hair streaming about her shoulders; all the repressed motherhood of her sterile years shining in her dark eyes.

His glance shifted as if he found here something he could not face.

And now that she had come, she did not know what to say. He broke the silence.

"I noticed you had left. I wondered—" Still he did not look at her.

"I had a headache," she said. "I came up and went to bed. I heard you come in, and thought—perhaps if you would rub my head—"

He started toward her. "Of course. Get back in bed."

"No, if you'll sit down I'll—"

He crossed quickly to her and taking her hand drew her to his knees. She did not lean against him; but sat up very straight, facing him, her eyes closed. He stroked her forehead, pressing the fingers of both hands in opposite directions toward her temples.

"Poor little girl!" he said.

She caught his head and drew it down on her bosom, against the heavy pounding of her heart. "Terrible the way my heart hammers when I have a headache," she said. "I suppose that's what causes the headache. Blood pumping too fast."

He did not reply, nor raise his head. She held him close. "I'm afraid Emma is going to be terribly disappointed about Pat. Did you know that—she and Don Talbott—are engaged?" She had to get it over.

"I suspected it. I saw them come in from the grounds." Still he did not raise his head. His voice was muffled in the folds of her robe.

A long silence followed in which she could hear the ticking of his watch and the thumping of her heart. Then the waggish notes of a saxophone broke upon the stillness like the silly, meaningless jabber of a clown in a house of sorrow.

"I'm so tired, Jimmie—of all this," she said. "I thought a—long cruise might rest me—if you can get away."

"Anything you say, Pam. I can get away." Just that. No more.

After another pause, she said: "We've been married fourteen years, Jimmie. It's a long time—and I think—I'm sure—I love you more than I did at first. I loved you so much then that I felt I'd die if I didn't get you. Now, I love you so much—that I could—die—to make you happier. That ought to count for something, Jimmie," she finished with unconscious pleading in her voice.

His arm tightened around her. "It counts for a great deal, Pam."

She felt his big frame quiver. Horror swept her. Was he going to cry? He mustn't. It would shame him afterward. And—oh, if he should break down and confess his love for Pat! She couldn't endure it. Had Pat cared—yes. But not now. To erect a barrier between them, a skeleton that would be always in both their minds, to push them apart. If he knew that she knew, he would be shy of making any overtures to her; and she, on her side, would feel humbled in his sight if she seemed to woo him. No, whatever happened, he mustn't tell her.

"Jimmie, dear, I think I'll go to bed. My head is better and I'm tired."

His arms loosened instantly. She did not offer to kiss him. She did not want to see his face—but hurried from the room.

He stared at the closed door long after she had gone. Once, he started up as if to go to her; then he sank back, and sat leaning one elbow on the arm of his chair, his head in his hand.

WARREN was awakened by a rain of pebbles on his floor. Springing out of bed, he ran to the open window. Below stood Patricia, her oriental jacket flaming against the sun-drenched shrubbery; her eyes blue stars that watched Pamela's windows.

"The big Traveler's palm beyond the acacia, *at once!*" she hissed, waving frantically to Warren and darting away.

Dressing with the slap and dash of an ardent boy, he tiptoed out, and down the stairs.

She ran to meet him as he neared the tryst. "Something's happened!" she cried. "I can see it in your face. Has she said anything?"

He nodded.

"What? For heaven's sake don't act like a dummy! Did she blow up?"

"Pat, I can't talk about it."

"See here! You ungrateful brute-man! Tell me everything she said, *this instant.*"

"She told me that—you and Talbott were engaged."

A blank expression overspread Pat's face.

"Came and sat on my lap—and sympathized with me," he went on. "I felt like a dog with her poor little heart hammering against me, and she—making excuses for it—and telling me how she cared."

"And you, poor nut, I suppose you lit up and confessed everything!" said Pat sarcastically.

"No. But I was afraid she'd guess from my face; so I just kept my head down on her—"

"And now you're all chocked up with remorse. Honestly, men seem to have only brains to make money. Well, if you want to mess things up, I'm not going to break my head any longer about you. Don and I are going to be married in an hour and I won't have time to bother."

His remorseful expression gave way to swift alarm. "Pat! You're not going to do anything rash. I won't consent to—"

"Nobody asked your consent," she flared. "I've wired Mother and we are just waiting for the police station to open, or wherever it is they keep licenses. I'm marrying in my red jacket for revenge, and if you try to make me any trouble I'll spoil your doll's house by going right to Aunt Pam and telling her everything; and then you'll be worse off than you were before."

"It's blackmail," he cried.

"Of course it is. Haven't I simply *wrecked* my reputation for you? And don't forget that you promised me a pearl necklace if my plan succeeded."

"You succeeded, Pat, and of course you'll get your necklace," he said gravely. "But I'm not happy over it. She'll always be thinking I cared for you and that—"

"No, she won't. You can fall in love with her all over as fast as you like and act as big a nut as ever and she'll think you were just infatuated with me and that it wasn't real love."

"Then what's gained?"

"Only that she'll never get it in her head again that she can't lose you. You see, that's the whole point. Now run away. I'm expecting Don every minute."

When he turned hesitantly yet grinningly away, she called to him. "Mr. Warren," she said with the prim air of a schoolteacher setting an erring small boy to rights, "I don't want you to think just because a man mustn't be a mosquito netting for his wife to look through, that he has to be—bad—to keep her love; or make her *think* he's bad."

"I understand, Pat," he said, chuckling at her expression of womanish authority. "It's the uncertain quantity that puts zest into living; whether it's business or love, or just gold. Life itself would lose its charm if we could be dead sure of it, for even a single day." With his inside-out air he added: "I know it's so, because I read it in the funny sheet."

Pat drew herself up haughtily. "Mr. James Darcy Warren, the women of my generation can hear brains even when they sound a clownish bell. But the other generation—Aunt Pam's generation—mostly think Mark Twain was silly when he said the mouse sat on his hind legs and munched cheese on King Arthur's bald head. Put that in a bottle on your hip, old dear, and it will wake you up."

Warren's gravity deserted him. "I'll not forget, O Sage of a rouged and ear-ringed generation."

Penetrating International Diplomacy of 1950

The Wrath *to* Come

Grant Begins to See His Way Through the Plot That Menaces America, but Finds a Seemingly Insurmountable Wall in Susan's Heart

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Illustration by Harley E. Stivers

***Begin this serial with any instalment.** The story up to this point is here.*

IN HIS room at the Great Central Hotel in New York Grant Slattery waited, watching the girl who, in uncontrollable excitement, unable to remain still a moment, walked about. It was a strange thing to realize that the fate of the world was in the hands of this little Eurasian adventuress—mistress of a Japanese diplomat, enraged by his defection. She had been a dancer at Monte Carlo. Now she was in New York. And she knew what Grant Slattery would have given all his millions to know.

"Mademoiselle Cleo," he said, "I beg of you—be calm! You did a foolish thing—yes. You shot your rival for Itash's—ah—affection. But you only grazed her arm. You may be arrested—but it can be no great matter, even so—"

"Be calm!" she scoffed. "What have you at stake? While—I—me—ah! Be still, you!"

Grant smiled a little. How much he had at stake she could not, after all, know. For years, he had been at work as an unofficial secret agent of America, trying to learn the truth of a conspiracy among Germany, Japan and Russia against his country. Thirty years after the formation of the great Pact of Nations, America was the one great country outside the Pact. She was therefore open to attack by a combination of its members. Having subscribed to the Limitation of Armaments, she would be helpless.

What Grant suspected, Lord Yeovil, the British prime minister, also believed. With Grant's aid he had brought to naught a plot, at Monte Carlo, to defeat his great coup of inviting America, for the last time, to join the Pact. The invitation had been sent. Grant was home to take part in the bitter fight to induce his country to accept that invitation—a fight apparently doomed to fail, owing to the skilful propaganda campaign led by Cornelius Blum, the great German magnate. But if America could be convinced that her three enemies had violated the Limitation of Armaments convention, that they were, in fact, plotting against her, she could still be saved.

So much, as a patriot, Grant had at stake. And as a man he had more, too. He loved—and dared to think he was loved in return—Susan Yeovil, Lord Yeovil's daughter. But by a cruel trick of Fate he had been placed in a compromising position; had been held up as one who had carried across the ocean with him, on his yacht, Gertrude von Diss, wife of a German diplomat, and the woman who had jilted him without warning, three years before. His one chance to redeem himself lay in the success of an effort that now depended upon Cleo's revelation of what she knew.

"Mademoiselle Cleo," he said, "I beg of

you to tell me what you know—to wait no more for Itash. He is faithless—let him go. I will see that you live the rest of your life as you please, and in such luxury as you have never dreamed of—"

"In five minutes you will know," she said. "In five minutes, if Itash will not promise to give up Yvonne, I shall tell you all for nothing. Then we will see."

"You will trust to his promise?"

"If he lies, he knows that this time I shall kill him."

There was a slow and somewhat ponderous knocking at the door. She turned toward it breathless, expectant. Then suddenly she gave a little cry.

"It is tôo soon!" she exclaimed. "It must be those others. Protect me. For heaven's sake, don't let them take me before Itash comes."

The knocking was repeated, and this time the door was opened. There was no doubt about the character of the two men who entered; detective was written on every feature. One stood by the door. The other advanced a little into the room.

"Mr. Slattery, I believe," he said. "Sorry to intrude upon you, sir, but I have a warrant for the arrest of that young woman. You're Mademoiselle Cleo?" he went on.

"What do you want with me?" she demanded.

"I'll have to take you to the police station, young lady," was the brusk reply. "Charge of shooting with the intent to murder. You'd better keep your mouth closed till you get to headquarters."

She looked around her a little wildly.

"Can't you make them wait until Itash comes?" she begged of Grant. "He will, perhaps, arrange with them. I didn't mean to hurt her. All that I want is Itash."

"Say, young lady!" the detective interposed. "Our orders are that you are not to talk. We've an automobile outside and if you'll just allow me to run you over first for arms, I guess we can let you walk ahead of us and no fuss."

"I have no weapons," she declared, holding out her arms. "You can search me if you like."

"WHO'S this Itash she's talking about?" the detective inquired, as he passed his hands over the girl's quivering body.

"Count Itash—the Japanese gentleman who was with the girl she is supposed to have shot at," Grant told him.

"So he was the cause of the trouble, was he?" the man observed. "Well, young lady, he'll be able to see you at Police Headquarters after you've been examined."

"Before I go," she began.

"Stop it!" the detective insisted. "My orders are strict. You are not to be allowed to talk. Special orders from the Chief of Police. I don't want to do anything harsh and I don't wish to lay hands on the young lady," the man went on, turning to Grant, "but she's got to cut out the gab. This way, young lady."

They had already taken a step toward the door when it was suddenly opened. The second detective stood on one side, as Itash walked in. He was looking very pale and solemn, but, as usual, neatly and correctly dressed. Cleo would have rushed toward him but for the restraining hand upon her shoulder.

"Sammy!" she cried. "You see what they're doing to me. They are taking me to prison. Tell them about it, Sammy. It was not really my fault. Send them away, please. Give them money. Tell them I am sorry—anything. And tell me that it is finished with Yvonne. Take me away with you, Sammy."

He looked at her without changing a muscle of his countenance. Then he turned to the detective.

"Where are you taking her?" he inquired.

"To Police Headquarters," the man replied. "And it's about time we were off."

"Do not let me detain you," Itash said coldly. "Police Headquarters is a very good place indeed for that young lady. She was once a friend of mine, but she is so no longer. She tried to murder the young lady who was my companion last night. I have no wish to stand in the way of her punishment."

Mademoiselle Cleo seemed to have become suddenly calm. Only her eyes burned as she looked toward Itash.

"It is thus you speak to me?" she moaned. "You have no pity—no longer any love?"

"It is finished," he pronounced.

She beckoned to Slattery, who stepped quickly forward. The officer would have thrust his hand over her mouth but he was too late. She whispered for a moment

in Grant's ear. Then she turned to the detective.

"I am quite ready," she announced. "This time you have only a small charge against me. I shot to frighten, not to kill. There is a time coming before very long when I shall kill. Farewell, Itash. You have done an evil day's work for yourself. If you knew how many of your secrets still lurk in my brain besides those which I have shared with our friend, Mr. Slattery, here, you would not—"

THE detective's patience was at an end. His hand closed upon her lips. He pushed her from the room. In the hallway they heard her muffled laugh.

"Gentlemen," Itash said, "I am sorry that you should have been troubled in this matter. I did not know that it was to the apartments of Mr. Grant Slattery that I was coming."

"Mademoiselle Cleo is an acquaintance of mine from Monte Carlo," Grant reminded him. "You doubtless remember our little supper party there."

"With much pleasure," Itash assented. "Nevertheless, Mr. Slattery, a word of caution may not be out of place. The young lady is not altogether trustworthy. Her tempers are violent. She is not truthful. She is, indeed, dangerous."

"Then we are both well rid of her, Count," Grant observed dryly.

"It grieves me to speak ill of one of her sex," the young man continued, drawing on his gloves. "Mademoiselle Cleo was once my very good friend. I tire of her and take another, and she will not accept the situation. It was foolish."

"Very foolish indeed," Grant assented.

"No word concerning the affairs of my country, no single sentence of political import of any sort whatsoever has ever passed my lips when in the presence of Mademoiselle Cleo," Itash declared. "Therefore what she says she knows, she invents. I wish you good morning, gentlemen."

He made a dignified and leisurely exit. They heard the door close behind him, heard him pass down the corridor toward the lift.

"What did she whisper to you?" Stoneham asked.

"She was a trifle cryptic," Grant replied. "She spoke in French. What she said was simply this: 'The secret of the world is to be found in two small volumes hidden in the box of gold, in number 1208.' Box of gold! What the mischief was she driving at?"

There was a sudden change in Stoneham's expression.

"Why, Grant!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you ever heard the story about Cornelius Blum's father?"

"I've heard one version of it," Grant acknowledged. "Tell me yours."

"You remember his history, of course. He was a great friend of the Kaiser Wilhelm's—one of the war party, one of those who really believed in Germany and her divine right to rule the world. The Treaty of Versailles broke his heart. On his deathbed he wrote a letter, which he placed in a gold casket which the Kaiser had once given him, containing the freedom of the city of Berlin. The idea always has been that that letter was a charge upon his son to see that some day or other Germany was avenged. Cornelius Blum carries that casket always with him. If there really does exist any document in the world, any secret treaty or understanding between Germany and, say, Japan, having for its object a consummation of this injunction, why, that's the likeliest place in the whole world to find it."

"What about the number 1208?" Grant asked.

"That was what put me on the scent," Stoneham replied. "Twelve hundred and eight is the number of Cornelius Blum's suite on the twelfth floor of this hotel."

ITASH proceeded to pay his morning call upon Blum. He was passed through into the presence of the great man within a very few minutes. He entered courteous, self-assured, dignified. He was reduced within a few seconds to a state of abject collapse. For years afterward he remembered the horror of those moments. Cornelius Blum's opening words filled him with blank amazement, his final ones stripped him of every shred of confidence and self-respect.

"I have been associated at different times," the latter ended, "with rogues and hucksters, thieves, liars and fools. I have never yet entrusted the destinies of a great

nation to a man who cannot keep his mouth shut even in his sleep!"

"But how could I tell?" the young man gasped. "How do I know even now that what you tell me is true?"

"Let me remind you of this," Blum went on. "We talked for hours one night in Monte Carlo on the matter of steel. With two companies over here we are all right. Over the third we have no control or any influence. We discussed the possibility of this third company adding up the amount of your contracts with their two rivals—even leaving out the steel plates we sent you from Germany—and of presenting a report to the Limitation of Armaments Conference. You remember that conversation?"

"I remember it perfectly," Itash groaned.

"You left me with your mind full of the subject. It was at the time when Mademoiselle Cleo was your fancy. Very well. The other day Mademoiselle calls upon our friend Grant Slattery, and the next morning he visits the representatives of each one of those steel firms. Can't you see that trouble or suspicion at the Conference might upset everything we have done?"

"I know," Itash muttered. "Still, they will not discover anything that counts in time. We have been very clever. We have four secret harbors and two secret dockyards, besides the one in China. Each battleship we built was duplicated. The two were given the same name. We kept even the work people in ignorance. The flying ships are safe. They are up in Ulensk. Now I shall send a cable. The four battleships which have been launched must steam away northward. The four that are ready to be launched under the same name must take their place. Everybody will believe that it is the same ships returned. I am not afraid. There are American spies in Tokyo, but our secret harbors have never been visited."

"Go and send your cable and come back again," Blum directed. "Warn your people that without a doubt investigations will be made. Let your fleet be maneuvered in every way so as to confuse undesired onlookers. But remember, nothing must interfere with its final assembly. You know the date."

Itash smiled for the first time.

"On November the first," he said, "we have the most complete and wonderful plan of movement. Units of the fleet will appear from all sorts of unexpected places. They have their final meeting-place only five days' steaming from San Francisco."

Blum nodded. "Go and send your cables," he ordered. "Then return here."

For a few moments after the departure of Itash, Cornelius Blum sat motionless in his chair, his eyes fixed upon the calendar which stood on his table. Finally he rose to his feet, opened the door and called to his secretary.

"Miss Herman," he enjoined, "for half an hour I am engaged. You understand? Not even a telephone message."

"I understand perfectly, sir," she replied. "It is as usual."

SHE returned to her place. Blum reentered his sitting-room, carefully locking the door behind him. The apartment, before the changes necessitated by his demands, had been an ordinary hotel sitting-room, with heavy plush furniture and curtains. There were two windows, across which he carefully drew the curtains until every scrap of daylight was excluded. He then turned on the electric light and made his way to the ponderous safe, which looked as though it were built into the farther wall. He undid his coat and waistcoat and released the chain which was wound around his body. At the end of it were two keys. With one, after a few minutes' adjustment, he opened the safe. From underneath a pile of papers he drew out a curiously shaped and heavy box fashioned of beaten gold. On the left-hand side of the lid were the arms of the city of Berlin, on the right the arms of the Hohenzollerns. In the middle was an inscription in German:

To Cornelius Blum, the faithful servant of this city and friend of his Kaiser, WILHELM, 1913.

Blum closed the door of the safe and returned to his place at the desk, carrying the box with him. He lit the electric lamp which stood upon the table and, with the other key, unlocked the casket. Its contents were simple enough in appearance—two small morocco-bound volumes resembling diaries at the top and a few sheets of parchment on which were several great seals; underneath a letter, yellow with age, crumpled a little at the corners, and showing

signs of slight wear in one of the folds. With careful fingers Cornelius Blum spread the letter out on the table before him. At either end he placed a small paper-weight. Then he folded his hands and read its contents to himself in a very low undertone. The roar of the city seemed muffled by the closely drawn curtains. One thought of a dark and silent mosque in the middle of a sunlit Oriental city. Here was a man at his devotions—and this was what he read:

My Beloved Son:

I write you this message from my death-bed with the last fragment of strength with which an inscrutable Providence has endowed me. I go before my work is accomplished, and, for that reason, a heavier burden must rest upon your shoulders. You will bear it worthily because of the purpose. My son, the chosen people of God were often called upon to face suffering—aye, and humiliation. But in the end they triumphed. Greatness will always survive, and the greatest thing upon this earth is the soul of the German people.

Have nothing to do, Cornelius, with those who would write her apologia. The empires of the world were built up with blood and sacrifice, and the knowledge of these things was in our hearts, we, who planned the war and believed that we should see Germany the ruling power of the world from Palestine to London. We struck too soon or too late. History may, perhaps, tell you. Next time the hour must be chosen so that failure is an impossible element.

All that shall happen in the future and the way to our glorious goal has been discussed between us many a time. My charge upon you is this: Remember the maxims of those who made Germany. The man whom you forgive will never forgive you. The man to whom you show a kindness will owe you a grudge for it. Hate your enemies in life, in death, and after death. When the time comes, every man and woman of the United States of America, of France, of England is your enemy. Never did the Philistines oppress and humiliate the children of Israel as these people have done the nation of His later choice. Show no mercy. Strip them—those whom you leave alive—of wealth, women and honor. Let them feel the iron in their souls which that accursed Treaty of Versailles has brought into the souls of our own people. When Germany strikes again see that she climbs forever to the highest place among the peoples of the earth. By the sword Germany came into being, and by the sword she shall fight her way to the chosen places. Farewell, Cornelius, and remember my last words. *Never spare an enemy or misuse a friend.*

Cornelius Blum.

The sound of the man's low voice ceased. Yet for several moments he sat quite still. A breath of wind, coming through the opened upper part of the window, moved the curtains an inch or two, and a thin sharp shaft of sunlight fell like a glancing rod of gold across the table, resting for a minute upon his face. All that there was of coarseness, even the humanity of good-fellowship and humor, seemed to have vanished. Cornelius Blum had become the prototype of his country, fashioned, according to his father's mandate, of blood and iron. He might indeed have posed, in those few moments, for a statue of the great avenger. There was implacable hatred in every feature and line of his face, unforgiving, unmerciful. He was the incarnation of a real and living spirit.

The ceremony was over. With reverent fingers the letter was restored to its place at the bottom of the box. For a few minutes he pored over the contents of the two morocco-bound volumes. Finally he returned everything to the box, carried it to the safe, reset the latter's combination, and carefully locked it. Then he turned out the lights, drew back the curtains, lit a cigar and unlocked the door.

"Business as usual, Miss Herman," he said.

"Mr. Gurlenheim from the New London Steel Company is waiting to see you, sir," she announced.

A shadow of anxiety rested for a moment on Blum's face.

"I WILL see him at once," he decided. Count Itash too, immediately he returns."

Mr. Gurlenheim was a short, rather pudgy man, with flaxen hair streaked with gray, a guttural voice, and a fussy manner.

"My friend," he exclaimed, as soon as he had shaken hands, "it is a serious matter on which I have come to see you. We have received a communication signed by the Secretary of the Limitation of Armaments Conference requiring a statement of all steel sold to Japan for the period of the last two years. We are asked to prepare it at once, as it may be referred to at the next meeting of the Conference."

"Nothing to worry about," Blum declared, pushing a box of cigars across the table. "The Conference have accepted the position so far as the steel supplied from Germany is concerned—faulty plates. Our people conceded—on paper—an enormous reduction in price. As regards the steel from America—well, Japan overbought. That's all she can say. There seemed a possibility of shortage in steel and she decided to cover herself. We're only limited to

building, not to making provision for building."

Mr. Gurlenheim drew a very large silk handkerchief of florid design from his pocket and mopped his forehead.

"This year will seem like ten to me," he confessed. "It is all very well for you, my friend. You will be in Germany when the storm bursts. Suppose the people should take it into their heads to wreak vengeance upon us here. They might—if they knew."

Cornelius Blum smiled scornfully.

"If you feel like that," he said, "you'd better go to the Riviera for a few months, and leave some one else your share of the plunder here. Only you must let me know quickly. You are down for very unimportant work, nothing that exposes you to the slightest risk, but I want to be sure of even the weakest link in the chain."

"I shall stay," Gurlenheim declared. "I know what I have to do. But suppose —suppose for one moment, Blum, that anything went wrong. Say, for instance, that things came out at the Limitation of Armaments Conference and that America decided to join the Pact?"

"In that case there would be a postponement," was the grim acknowledgment. "The end might not come in your days or mine."

"No fear of the whole scheme leaking out with names and that sort of thing?" Gurlenheim persisted.

"There is no fear of that," Blum assured him. "The only complete list of names and stations in this country never leaves my possession. I have been looking at it tonight. No one else ever sees it."

Mr. Gurlenheim began to feel a man again—or as much of a man as Nature intended him to be. He accepted the cigar which he had previously ignored, pinched it carefully and admired its quality.

"It is a great thing to be a very rich man like you," he sighed. "Money comes fast enough over here, but not fast enough for the years. I am fifty years old and I have barely a million."

Blum smiled. "Before this time next year you can call it ten," he promised.

GRANT drew a little sigh of relief as, in response to his invitation, the door of his room was opened and his long-expected visitor arrived. He rose at once to his feet. For a person whose enthusiasms were chiefly latent, his manner was almost exuberant.

"Colonel Hodson," he declared, "you're the one man in America I've been longing to see ever since I landed. I'm afraid I'm responsible for bringing you back from your vacation."

The newcomer smiled slightly as he shook hands. He was a tall, fine-looking man, with strong features and a dignified carriage. His eyes wandered from Grant to Stoneham, who was seated at the table writing a letter.

"This is my friend, Mr. Dan Stoneham, late editor of the *New York*," Grant explained. "He is with me up to the eyes in this business. Dan, come here and shake hands with Colonel Hodson, head of the—well, what do you call your department now, Hodson? Home Secret Service, it used to be before the name 'Secret Service' became taboo."

" 'Service A,' we call it now," Hodson confided. "Nothing much in a name, anyway. And nothing much in the job lately. I'd been over in Honolulu a month when they cabled for me."

Grant pushed up an easy-chair, produced cigars, whisky and a siphon, and rang for ice.

"I was afraid they weren't going to send for you after all," he observed. "They didn't seem in any way anxious to put me in touch with you. Tell me honestly, Hodson, what do they think of me in the Department?"

"They are interested," the latter acknowledged, stretching himself out and lighting a cigar. "They have a great respect for your insight on all ordinary matters, but in the present instance they are inclined to think that you have a bee in your bonnet."

"I was afraid so," Grant admitted. "I'm not surprised at it."

"They think that you've been mixing with the foreigners, and especially with the British, pretty freely, over on the other side," Hodson continued, "and that you've got a lot of un-American stuff in your blood. You know Secret Service and foreign plots and all these 'German cum Japanese' scares don't cut much ice in Washington these days. You should hear Senator Ross on the subject."

"I've heard him," Grant groaned. "I

know the spirit, too, and I know perfectly well, Hodson, that if I'd been living in America for the last twenty years and hadn't been out of it except as a tourist, I should probably be feeling exactly the same way. Ross is wrong. I should have been wrong. There's a very terrible crisis looming up before us. You and I, Hodson, are going to avert the greatest calamity with which the world has ever been threatened."

"Let me warn you," Hodson said, "my instructions are to go dead slow with you. I am to do nothing which will make a laughingstock of the Department or which will evoke even questions from nations with whom we are upon friendly terms."

"I quite understand your position," Grant assured him.

"Let's get to work then," Hodson suggested. "Give me an outline of your suspicions and show me the loose threads that you can't lay hold of yourself."

"Right!" Grant declared, and proceeded to do so.

Hodson listened with interest and with growing conviction. At the news of Cleo's hint, and at hearing that she was held without bail, and without the privilege of seeing even a lawyer, he swore. He could, he said, arrange all that. But at headquarters, an hour later, he came back to Grant with a grave face.

"WELL, you're right, so far, Slattery," he confessed. "There's a conspiracy here to keep that young woman from communication with anybody at all, a conspiracy which is entirely against the law and police regulations and which is going to lead to a whole heap of trouble later on. However, there it is, and they're in it deep enough to run a pretty big risk. They've tried every mortal bluff they can think of, but their present attitude clean gives the show away. In an hour's time they will be compelled to let me visit her. Until then we'll take a drive round and I'd like to hear a little more of your story."

They drove about for an hour, and Grant confided to his companion a great deal of the result of his wanderings and investigations during the last two years. Hodson listened imperturbably.

When they returned to Headquarters Grant again waited for his friend, who this time was gone for a little more than ten minutes. When he returned there was a steely glint in his eye.

"Slattery," he announced, "you win all around, so far as this girl's concerned. They've had her up while we've been away, discharged her, and they have the effrontery to assure me that they let her walk out of court without asking where she was going to and without having her followed. They've just turned her loose in New York and left us to hunt. I don't like it. Come along!"

"Where to?" Grant asked.

"To see some friends of mine, who can tackle this job," was the stern reply. "We ought to be able to find her before many hours are passed."

Hodson and Grant dined together that evening in the latter's room, and Grant was still telling his story when the telephone rang. It was for Colonel Hodson.

Hodson spoke a few brief words and listened.

"Slattery," he said, "that was a man from Poynter's Detective Agency. They're the people we called on this morning about this young woman. They think they've found her. Will you come along with me?"

They jumped into a taxi and Hodson gave the man an address on the other side of the park. They pulled up outside what was evidently a second-class lodging-house. On the steps a young man was waiting.

"Colonel Hodson?" he asked.

"Right," Hodson answered. "Are you from Poynter's?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Poynter's upstairs himself. He left me here to wait for you. Will you go up to the top floor?"

They climbed six flights of stairs. On the sixth floor Poynter stood waiting. He shook hands with Hodson and nodded to Grant.

"We're up against a nasty piece of business, Colonel," he announced. "I wanted you to see exactly how things stood for yourself before the police got hold of it."

"Get on with the story," Hodson urged.

"In the first place," the detective pointed out, "the girl's bell is cut. You see the wire there. It's a clean cut, been done with a pair of nippers, within the last hour or two. Now come inside, sir. But," he added, his hand upon the handle of the

door, "you must be prepared for something unpleasant."

"The young lady?" Grant exclaimed.

"She is dead," Poynter answered gravely. "The scene is set for suicide. Personally I think there is not the slightest doubt that she was murdered. The door of her room was locked and the key is nowhere in her room. I picked the lock after I had tracked her down. This way, sir. The smell is still bad, but I have had the window open nearly an hour."

THEY entered what was little more than a garret bedroom. On the bed lay Cleo's body. Mr. Poynter raised the sheet which he had drawn over her face and let it drop almost immediately. Above the girl's head was the gas jet and from it a small piece of tube hung downwards. The remains of the imprisoned gas were still escaping by the open window.

"She was quite dead when I picked the lock," Poynter told them, "and for the moment I thought the gas would get me. I managed to make a rush for it to the window, though."

"But surely all this points to her having committed suicide?" Grant queried.

"I am perfectly certain all the same that she did not," the detective replied. "Not only has her bell been cut but the telephone is cut too. She was lying half across the floor, trying to reach it or the window when I found her, and the window was fastened down with a nail which had only recently been driven in. There is not the least doubt but that some powerful person entered her room, held her down until the last moment, then rushed out, locking the door behind him. There are marks on her throat which could not possibly have been self-inflicted."

Grant searched the room for a note or letter, but in vain.

"What she knew," Hodson decided at last, "she has taken with her. You had better warn the police, Poynter, and stand by while they take a record of the things you have pointed out to me. You can say that we two have seen them."

"And don't let them take her away," Grant insisted. "I will be responsible for the funeral."

"There's just one thing," Poynter said, casting his professional eye once more around the room. "I have a perfectly definite idea of my own as to the type of person who was following this poor girl. Am I to go on?"

"Absolutely," Hodson replied. "You can treat it as a Government affair, Poynter, and take your orders from me. The young lady was suspected of having political secrets in her possession."

"I'll make a report in a few days," Poynter promised.

They descended to their taxi and drove away. Both men were silent. Grant was filled with a sense of horror. The sordidness of the little scene, its atmosphere of tragedy, its cruelty, had brought the tears into his eyes.

"If ever I get my fingers on the throat of that brute Itash," he muttered, "I think that I shall kill him. What did you think of the matter, Hodson?"

"I think that Poynter was entirely right," was the confident reply. "And every moment I am coming round to your point of view. I am beginning to believe that this conspiracy really exists."

"You're coming in?" Grant inquired, as the taxi drove up to the Great Central Hotel.

Hodson shook his head. "You'll see nothing of me for twenty-four hours or so," he announced. "I am going to work in directions you can't approach. You and Stoneham go on with your propaganda, even though the thing looks hopeless. Let your friends think that's all you've got to depend upon. Don't go away from your rooms for more than an hour or two without leaving word where you're to be found. There may be some big things doing when I get started."

IT WAS three whole days before Grant saw anything more of Hodson. Then the latter appeared in his room about seven o'clock in the evening and demanded a cocktail.

"Glad you've remembered my existence," Grant grumbled good-humoredly, as he gave the necessary orders. "Stoneham and I have been pegging away. There are heaps of things I want to know about."

Hodson nodded. "There are big events close at hand," he announced. "A great deal of what you suspect is true, with a few other trifles thrown in. Can you go to England tomorrow?"

"England!" Grant exclaimed. "Why, the Limitation of Armaments Conference starts here in a little over a fortnight."

"You'll be back for it," the other assured him. "I want you to catch the *Katalonia* tomorrow morning. She sails at eight o'clock. Let me see, tomorrow's Saturday. You'll be in Plymouth Wednesday, and in London Wednesday night. Lord Yeovil will be expecting you. You can sail back on Saturday in the *Sefalonia*. You'll probably return with Yeovil and his staff."

"What am I to do in England?" Grant asked, trying to keep back an alien and most disturbing thought.

"Deliver dispatches from Washington," was the prompt reply. "I have them in my pocket. I came through from Washington today. Great Britain polices the eastern waters for the Limitation of Armaments Conference, and we want a seaplane patrol over certain specified districts. There are a few other little matters to be inquired into, too."

"Look here," Grant expostulated. "You're not sending me over to play messenger boy, are you?"

"Not likely!"

"What's the game, then? Do you want to get me out of the way?"

"Not precisely that. Where are you dining?"

"With you, anywhere. I was going up to the Lotos Club. Stoneham generally drops in there."

"I'm tired," Hodson confessed. "I'd like to hear some music and look at some pretty women. I'll go round and have a bath and change and call for you in half an hour. We'll get a corner table at Sherry's. I think, as we're saving empires, we can afford some terrapin and a bottle of champagne."

"You're serious about that trip to England—because I must have my fellow pack?"

"Serious! My God, I am!" was the emphatic answer. "You'll be the chief spoke in the wheel for the next ten days. You won't miss anything here, either. I'm gathering up some wonderful threads but I'm doing it silently. I'll come round in half an hour. I'm on your floor."

A fit of restlessness seized Grant. He gave his servant the necessary orders, interviewed the travel manager in the hotel and obtained the best accommodations possible on the steamer. Then he permitted himself to think deliberately, opened up the closed chambers in his mind, welcomed reflection and memory. He would see Susan. He would find out what her silence really meant, what she thought or believed about him.

In a sense, it was all very hopeless. He had been forced into an accursed position. He scarcely knew even now how to appraise it. And yet the big thing remained unaltered and still seemed to tower over everything else—he loved Susan.

THE two men dined at Sherry's in a retired corner. They dined, as Grant complained, like profiteers and gourmands. Hodson ordered caviar and lobster Newburg, terrapin, saddle of lamb, asparagus and champagne.

"A disgraceful meal," Grant declared, as he sipped his cocktail. "Do you really think we shall get through it?"

"Of course we shall," Hodson laughed. "To tell you the truth I've scarcely eaten anything for two days. They were a tough lot on the trains to Washington and back. I can manage better in the cities."

"What do you mean?" his companion asked curiously.

"Well, the same powers that murdered that poor girl and translated it into suicide were out for me," Hodson explained. "If they had known that it was you who started me off, I expect you'd be in the same position. My own little crowd are pretty useful, though. And Poynter's men are wonderful. There are two of them at the next table. They look all right, don't they?"

"They look just like two successful business men talking over a deal," Grant observed.

"Well, they aren't," Hodson assured him. "They're two of Poynter's shrewdest detectives. They've got guns in their pockets and their job is to see that no one tries to steal a march on me from the lounge. One of my men is down in the kitchen. I dared not eat anything on the train, for they were in with the cook there. I've been shot at twice in the last twenty-four hours. They nearly got me, too. It's a great storm that's gathering, Grant."

"Exactly why are you sending me to England?"

"Listen," was the earnest reply. "This is official. It comes from the White House. You know who owns the *New York* now. You know the power at the back of the greater part of our press. They want to make bad blood between Great Britain and this country. You can guess why. They're at it already, and the British press, quite naturally, is beginning to take it up. Use all your influence with Lord Yeovil. Tell him the truth. Get him to take you to see his own big newspaper people and try to keep the feeling down. Beg him to disregard any attacks upon him personally either before he comes or directly he lands. It's all part of the game. It will all be over, tell him, in two months; and for heaven's sake do what you can to stop trouble."

"I certainly will," Grant promised. "I used to have a certain amount of influence with Lord Yeovil."

"That's why we're sending you—one reason, at any rate. Then—hullo! Another farewell party, I see."

"Why farewell?" Grant asked, looking curiously at the newcomers.

"I hadn't come to that. Cornelius Blum is sailing for England tomorrow. He'll be your fellow passenger."

"Where the devil is he off to?"

"A dozen of the most astute brains in the country, besides my own, have tried to answer that question," Hodson replied. "At present, I must frankly admit that we don't know. I have a theory. He's getting a trifle shaken up in New York. Not exactly scared, but nervous. He wants to reestablish confidence. There's a dinner of German bankers in London at which he is advertised to take the chair. He imagines that his attendance at that function just now will put us off the scent. He'll probably come back by your steamer."

"Is he taking the casket with him, I wonder?" Grant reflected.

"I may consider some day," Hodson said deliberately, "that within the last few hours I have made the mistake of my life. That girl's whisper to you was probably the vital part of all that she had to tell. I honestly believe that the key to the whole conspiracy—and there is a conspiracy, Grant, I'll tell you that—is in that casket, side by side, no doubt in affectionate communion, with that letter from old man Blum, the present man's father, which we know he always carries with him. They'll risk a lot for sentiment, these people.

"I honestly believe I ought to have raided his private room with a dozen picked men, broken open his safe and casket and shot myself if I found nothing. I believe it was a fair risk. Honestly, Grant, it wasn't that I funked it. It was just because I knew all the time how Cornelius Blum would have laughed at me if the thing had been a fake, how the Department would have laughed at me, how the press would have poked fun."

"ALL the same," Grant proposed a little doggedly, "give me a dozen men and a plan of campaign and I'll run the risk."

"As a last resource," Hodson declared, "it is always open to us. Personally, I have some hopes in other directions. Now, let us see whom our friend, Cornelius Blum, is entertaining. H'm! A respectable lot, but suggestive. Two great steel men, Pottinger, the new editor of the *New York*, Admiral Purvin—he's all right but inclined to be talkative—and Doctor Sinclair Forbes, the great Jewish educationalist. A respectable party but a dash of the Teuton about most of them. A farewell party that amounted to anything would have been given in his rooms. By the way, Grant, if you speak to Blum on the way out, don't tell him you're sailing tomorrow.

"I've arranged for you to be a quarter of an hour late. They'll put the gangway down again for you. I'm beginning to have great faith in Blum's organization. If he considered your presence in England likely to prove inconvenient, I think it's very doubtful whether you would reach the steamer in time. Now he's seen us. Wave your hand, Slattery. Play his game. Love your enemies on the surface. Be glad to see the people you wish were at the bottom of the sea. It's a great game as Blum plays it. How he must hate to see us together! And yet, behold! A great honor is coming to us."

Blum had risen to his feet, with a word of excuse to his guests, and came across the room to them. He beamed upon Grant and shook hands with Hodson cordially, reminding him of a previous meeting at Washington.

"I am giving a little farewell party," he announced. "I have decided, rather at the last moment, to accept an invitation to visit London."

"Didn't I once hear you say that you seldom visited England?" asked Grant.

"Your memory is excellent, Mr. Slattery," Blum admitted. "To tell you the truth, I do so now more from a sense of duty than with the expectation of any pleasure. The whole world knows that my father hated England, and, in a milder form, I have inherited his dislike. But, in these days of settled peace, what can one do? What good does it do to ourselves or to the world to keep open the old sore? I have been asked to preside at the anniversary dinner given to celebrate the reopening of the German banks in London. I must confess that at first I refused, but strong pressure has been brought to bear upon me. I have decided to go. Naturally my presence on such an occasion will mean the burying forever of all feelings of ill will."

"I think you are quite right," Hodson remarked.

"So do I," Grant echoed. "Your presence there will be of great significance. By the way, are you returning here then?"

"I am not sure. My friend Lutrecht, who is coming over to represent us at the Limitation of Armaments Conference, is very anxious that I should be here, but, personally, I think it exceedingly doubtful. My affairs in Germany require my presence, and I have promised to visit Hamburg within the next few weeks. I will only say au revoir, gentlemen. Mr. Slattery and I, at any rate, are citizens of the world, and we are likely to meet in most unexpected places."

He returned to his table and the two men exchanged a smile.

"Even Cornelius Blum," Hodson murmured, "has a knack of telling the truth sometimes."

THERE was humor rather than tragedy in the inevitable meeting between Cornelius Blum and Grant on the *Katalonia*. On the morning after their departure, Grant, while promenading the deck, heard a feeble tapping against the glass which enclosed the small promenade of one of the magnificent private suites, for which the vessel was famous. Mr. Cornelius Blum, almost unrecognizable, swathed in rugs, with a hot-water bottle at his feet and a servant by his side, was gazing out at the world with lackluster eyes. Grant obeyed his summons, pushed back the sliding door, and stepped inside.

"So you are here, my young friend," Cornelius Blum said weakly. "What does it matter? I am sick in the stomach. I do not think that I shall live till we reach Southampton."

"Not so bad as that, I hope," Grant ventured.

"It is worse," Blum groaned, "because I am beginning to hope that I shall not. Go away now. I am going to be ill. I wanted to be sure that I was not already seeing ghosts. If this were only your yacht!"

Grant hurried out with a word of sympathy.

"An object-lesson in proportionate values," he reflected, as he walked down the deck—and then his little effort at philosophy deserted him. He himself found great events dwarfed by smaller ones. His heart was pounding against his ribs. He was face to face with Gertrude von Diss!

His first impulse was ludicrously conventional. He hastened to relieve her of the rug she was carrying. Behind her came a maid with coat, pillows and other impedimenta of travel.

"Gertrude!" he exclaimed, as he stood with the rug upon his arm. "Where have you come from? Where have you been?"

"Stateroom Number 84," she replied, "and I am on my way to that chair, and please don't ask me whether I have been ill. Come and tuck me up as a well-meaning fellow passenger should."

He obeyed at once. The maid assisted his efforts, a deck steward supplemented them. Presently Gertrude declared herself comfortable and her entourage faded away. Grant sat by her side.

"I am going to break orders," he said gently. "I am afraid that you have been ill."

There were hollows in her cheeks. The freshness of her exquisite complexion had departed. Her eyes seemed to have receded. She was thin and fragile.

"Yes," she admitted. "I have been ill. A nervous breakdown, accompanied by great weakness of the heart, was all that the doctor could find to say about it. I might have helped his diagnosis."

"Don't, Gertrude!" he begged.

"My dear man, don't be afraid that I am going to break into reproaches! There

is nothing more illogical in the world than the position of the woman who complains of a man because he doesn't care for her. It is no sin of yours that you didn't love me, Grant. It was most certainly no sin of yours that, for a few hours, I made you pretend to. That was entirely my affair—entirely my cunning scheme, which went wrong. Some idiot once wrote that 'love begets love!' I thought that with my arms around your neck I could have brought about a sort of transfusion, forced a little of what was in my heart into yours—and you see I couldn't. In the morning I knew. You were very dutiful. Your lips were there for me if I wanted them. Your arms were ready for my body if I had been content to come. You were prepared to take advantage of all the nice and proper little arrangements which the circumstances had placed at my disposal. And of love there was not a scrap. I had made my venture and lost."

"I was a brute," he muttered. "I tried, Gertrude."

"WHAT a horrible condemnation!" she laughed bitterly. "And so true—so damnably true. You did try. I watched you trying, hour by hour. I watched you drink champagne at night. You tried to pretend. It was I who had to make the excuses—because I knew; I who had to pretend not to see your look of relief. You never deceived me for a single moment, Grant. It was I who gambled and lost."

"I am sorry."

"Don't be sorry," she enjoined. "Now, I will tell you something. Notwithstanding the great humiliation through which I have passed, I am glad. I am glad that it all happened. When this pain is lightened, I shall be more glad still. I was restless and unhappy while I believed that I could reawaken your love. Now, I am every day more rested, more content. And here is the wickedness of me, Grant—I am glad about it. I do not regret for a single moment my experiment. The only regret I have is that I failed."

"You know why?" he ventured.

"You were very frank about it," she admitted, "but somehow or other I couldn't believe that you knew, yourself. You are a man of parts, even a little older than your years, and Susan Yeovil, for all her charm, is young. I used my brain upon the matter—foolishly—the one thing brain has nothing to do with. Finished, my dear Grant! That rug a little more closely round my left foot, please. And don't imagine for a moment that I am going to offer my eternal friendship. About some matters my sentimentalism is not of the sloppy order. There's a jagged edge about our relations and always must be. But that's no reason why you shouldn't make the deck steward bring me some of that delicious bouillon."

"Where have you been, and where are you going?" Grant asked, as soon as he had ministered to her wants.

"I've been in New Hampshire," she told him, "staying with one of the neglected aunts of my family. A wonderful spot among the hills. Incidentally I was ill there."

"And now?"

"Well—I have plans but they are not concluded. My book, please, and then you can continue that swinging walk of yours Afterwards pay me the little attentions one fellow passenger may offer to another, if you like. But rest assured that your liberation is complete."

Grant chose another deck for his promenade. The magnificent and primitive selfishness of his sex had asserted itself. He found nothing but relief in this meeting with Gertrude. He could, at least, go to Susan with his hands free, so far as he ever could be free.

THE preliminaries of Grant's mission to London seemed to him, eager to get in touch with the vital things, monotonous and a little wearisome. He paid his respects to his own Ambassador and received the entrée to the Embassy. Afterward he made a formal application for an appointment with Lord Yeovil, and, after a brief delay, was accorded an interview in Downing Street at six o'clock that evening. The interval he filled up by calling with the naval attaché of his Embassy upon the Admiralty, and with the military attaché upon the War Office. At six o'clock precisely he was received in Downing Street by Arthur Lymane, who welcomed him with a certain amount of surprise.

"Glad to see you and all that, Slattery," he said, "but I never thought of you as being on the official side of anything. I

thought you'd absolutely chucked the service some years ago."

"I'm on a special mission," Grant explained. "They've sent me over to see one or two people here and especially Lord Yeovil. I'm going back on Saturday."

"We shall all be fellow passengers then," Lymane observed. "Do you think America will be able to stand the troop of us? Because we're all coming—even bringing our own little typists this time."

"Is Lady Susan—" Grant began hesitatingly.

"Yes, Lady Susan's coming along."

"She's all right, I suppose," Grant inquired. "I don't seem to have heard anything of her for some time."

"In the pink. She's been doing the honors for her father this season and doing them wonderfully, too."

"Engaged yet?" Grant ventured with a ridiculous affectation of carelessness.

"Nothing announced," was the cautious reply. "There are three or four of them running neck and neck. Bobby Lancaster's fallen behind a bit, although he's as keen as ever. No matrimonial news about you, I suppose, Slattery."

"None."

A little bell rang, and Grant was ushered into the presence of the man who, a few months ago, notwithstanding the differences in their ages, had been his most intimate friend. From the moment of his entrance, however, he understood that those days were past. Lord Yeovil was courteous, even friendly. Nevertheless, the change in his demeanor would have been apparent to a man of duller perceptions than Grant.

"Very glad to see you again, Slattery," the Prime Minister said, motioning him to a seat. "It seems a long time since we used to sit cudgeling our brains about those bridge problems."

"History is giving us something much more serious with which to occupy ourselves, sir," Grant replied. "All the things which you and I used to speak about in those days are coming to pass."

Lord Yeovil nodded. "This time, I gather, you come to me officially."

"THAT is true, sir. I am the bearer of a message and representations from my Government to yours. May I beg for your serious attention?"

"By all means," the Prime Minister acquiesced. "My car is ordered for seven o'clock. Till then I am at your service. I will just give Arthur a few messages and leave word that we are not to be disturbed."

Until a quarter to seven Lord Yeovil was an attentive listener. When his visitor at last finished, he was looking very grave.

"I have always felt a premonition of something of this sort," he confided. "My invitation to the United States was practically founded upon it. But I must confess that I had no idea that things were so imminent. Nor even at the present moment is it quite clear to me how Germany and Japan propose to work this thing."

"There is a great deal that we have to discover yet, sir," Grant declared. "We're reconstructing the scheme more thoroughly, day by day, but from the facts we have, it seems as though the central idea is that the Japanese fleet, which we have reason to believe is much larger than it should be, will approach the west coast of America at exactly the same time that the German fleet approaches the east coast—the German fleet, by the way, augmented, without a doubt, by the Russian. We in America, as you know, sir, being the instigators of the Limitation of Armaments, have been most scrupulous in keeping zealously to our official tonnage in every class of battleship, and the consequence seems to be that the American fleet, even if it could meet either of these others undivided, would be greatly inferior in numbers, and the idea of dividing it to meet these two opposing forces simultaneously would simply be to court disaster."

"This, of course, is all supposition," Lord Yeovil observed.

"Founded upon a certain amount of proof, which I shall presently produce," Grant went on. "The most urgent matter, however, which I was begged to discuss with you, sir, was the attitude of certain portions of the American press toward yourself and this country. I shall offer you presently an explanation of that attitude and I am to beg you most sincerely, in the name of the President and the Government, to use your influence with the press of your own country to avoid, so far as possible, recrimination and reprisal."

"It is true, I suppose," Lord Yeovil inquired, "that the *New York* is no longer

conducted in the interests of your Government?"

"The *New York*," Grant replied, "has been purchased by Cornelius Blum, and is the most dangerous organ in America today."

The Prime Minister glanced at his watch. "I fear that, for the present, we must adjourn our discussion," he announced. "It has been a great pleasure to see you again, Slattery, and to receive you in an official capacity. No one could have been more welcome—as a representative of your people."

Grant felt a sudden chill. He took his courage into both hands, however.

"I fear, sir," he ventured, "that I seem to have forfeited in your eyes the position of which I was once very proud—the position of being a friend of your household."

Lord Yeovil hesitated. The young man's directness was almost disconcerting.

"I would not say that," he rejoined, a little more kindly. "I am naturally a man of the world, and I am not a hard judge of any man's actions. This is a matter, however, which, if you choose, we will discuss at another time."

Grant rose to leave. There was again a very perceptible hesitation on his host's part.

"Tonight," he said, "I am giving a reception at Yeovil House, a sort of farewell before I leave for Washington. Most of the diplomatic people will be present. If you care to attend, it will give me great pleasure to see that you have a card. You are staying at the Embassy?"

"At Claridge's."

"You will have a card within an hour."

Grant once more summoned all his courage.

"Shall I have the pleasure of meeting Lady Susan?" he asked.

"My daughter has made her début this season as a political hostess," was the polite but somewhat cold reply. "She will be assisting me tonight."

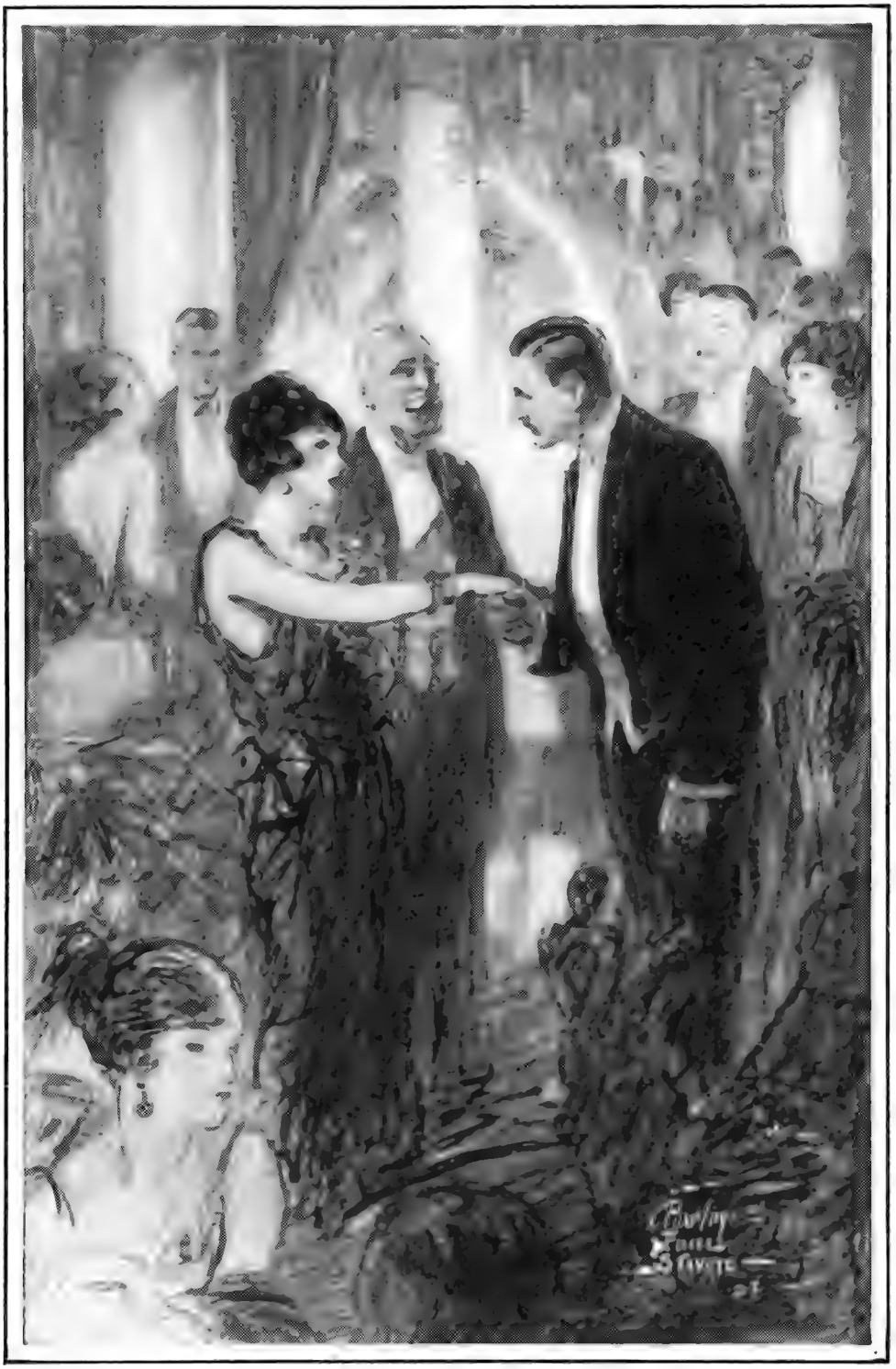
It was gone, then, the old cordiality, the easy terms of familiarity on which Grant had stood in the household. Lord Yeovil had become to him—as he had to most of the world—a courteous and polished diplomat, kindly and gracious in words and demeanor, but a man who seemed almost outside the amenities of life. And, if the change was so noticeable in him, what had he to expect from Susan?

He was in a depressed frame of mind when he called in at Carleton White's, selected the most beautiful roses he could find, and sent them to Yeovil House. Afterward he went back to the Embassy and was kept there until eight o'clock. There were many questions raised over the dispatches he had brought, which were of vital interest to various members of the staff.

Grant could not help contrasting the atmosphere here and the atmosphere in Washington. Geographically the two were not so far apart. The press, cables, wireless, rapid travel had, in the language of the journalists, brought the two hemispheres side by side, and yet there was an extraordinary difference in outlook, in political perspective. Things which in Washington seemed far away, phantasmal, hatched in the brain of the alarmist, inconceivable in real life, here assumed a different appearance. Here, at any rate, it was realized that Europe had become once more a huge whispering gallery of intrigue, that the curtain might at any moment be raised again on the great drama of war and bloodshed.

IT WAS after half-past ten when Grant, in the suite of his own Ambassador, mounted the stairs of Yeovil House and waited for some time in the block which had collected at the entrance to the reception rooms. From where he stood he suddenly recognized Susan, recognized her with a little shock of mingled pleasure and apprehension. His first impression was that she had changed, had grown older in some marvelous fashion, without the loss of any of her beauty or freshness. She wore the gown in which, only a few months ago, she had been presented. Her hair, in the midst of a galaxy of brilliant coiffures, was arranged as simply as in the old Monte Carlo days, and the jewelry she wore consisted only of a simple rope of pearls.

Yet she seemed to have assumed without effort and with perfect naturalness a becoming dignity and ease, wholly in keeping with her position as the hostess of a great gathering, and having a certain piquant charm when associated with her extreme youth. She talked gaily and without embarrassment to all the guests in turn, passing them on with that tactful little word which is sometimes a hostess's greatest difficulty and having always the air of thoroughly



Susan gave him her hand and smiled as frankly as ever. Yet Grant was aware of a great chill of disappointment. "Welcome back to London, Mr. Slattery," she said.

enjoying her position, of finding real joy in welcoming individually members of the distinguished crowd which streamed slowly by. More than once Lord Yeovil, who in his court dress and dazzling array of orders was himself a striking figure, found time to glance for a moment, half in amusement, half in delight, at the girl by his side, whom the society papers of tomorrow were all to acknowledge as one of London's most promising hostesses.

Step by step they moved on. Glancing upward, Grant fancied once that she recognized him. If so there was no change in her expression. She welcomed the Ambassador, talked for a moment with his wife, exchanged some jest about a golf match with the naval attaché, and finally turned away, to find Grant standing before her. She gave him her hand and smiled as frankly as ever. There was no trace of self-consciousness in her manner. Yet Grant was aware of a great chill of disappointment.

"Welcome back to London, Mr. Slattery," she said. "You really are a globe-trotter, aren't you? I hope you've brought some new bridge problems with you for father. He needs a little distraction, poor dear, with all those terrible newspapers of yours hurling thunderbolts at his head."

"Glad to see you, Slattery," Lord Yeovil added. "You'll find Arthur in the room to the left. If dancing amuses you, he'll introduce you to some good partners."

And that was the end of it. Grant found himself one among seven or eight hundred people, meeting an old acquaintance occasionally as he strolled about, introduced by Lymane to one or two young women with whom he danced, and all the time conscious of a sickening sense of disappointment. This was the meeting to which he had looked forward so eagerly. He was judged and condemned, wiped out, finished with. And why not? Who in the world would believe that Gertrude had come to him as a stowaway? Worse still, whom could he tell?

Later in the evening Arthur Lymane sought him out and presented him to a white-haired, lean-faced man, in the uniform of an admiral.

"Admiral Sullivan would like to have a word or two with you, Grant," he said. "Unofficially, of course. The Admiral is head of our Naval Intelligence Department."

"I have heard of Admiral Sullivan often," Grant declared, shaking hands. "Once in Tokyo, where he wasn't very popular, and again in Archangel."

"Don't mention that," the Admiral begged, with a little grin. "Tokyo I don't mind. I hear you fellows are getting the wind up on the other side of the pond."

"We're shaking in our shoes," Grant assured him. "Can we find a place to talk?"

"I know the run of this house," was the cheerful reply. "Come along."

THEY passed outside the formal suite of reception rooms into an apartment opening from the billiard room—a small den, in which were a few easy-chairs, a quantity of sporting literature, several decanters, and some soda water.

"This is Arthur Lymane's little shanty," Grant's cicerone explained. "Can I mix you one? Say when."

They subsided into easy-chairs. The Admiral's blue eyes were still twinkling.

"By the by," he confided, "I'm the man who handled your reports from Archangel and Berlin."

"You didn't throw them into the waste-basket, I hope?"

"Not on your life," was the prompt assurance. "I acted upon them, and jolly quick, too. They tell me you've been doing S.S. work for Washington for the last two years."

"Two years and a half, to be exact," Grant admitted. "I'm beginning to piece things together now."

"Interesting!" his companion murmured. "There have been rummy things going on all over the world—heaps of loose threads we've got hold of ourselves. I wonder whether your conclusions are the same as mine?"

"There is no secret about my conclusions, so far as you're concerned," Grant replied. "I am convinced that there is a most venomous plot brewing against my country. That is why I am so thankful that the question of our joining the Pact has been raised again. My only fear is that it's a trifle late."

The Admiral selected and lit a cigar with deliberate care.

"Well," he said, "the world knows my opinion of Pacts and Limitation of Armaments Conferences, and all that sort of

twaddle. They are started by philanthropic fools to be taken advantage of by rogues. I've given Yeovil seven questions to ask the Japanese representative at Washington, and I'll tell you that there isn't one of them which he will be able to answer."

"Thank heavens the Conference comes before the matter of joining the Pact is voted on by the Senate!" Grant exclaimed fervently.

"Damned good job, I should think," the other agreed. "It's easy enough to see that your country's being riddled with propaganda. As regards that Conference, how long is it supposed to last?"

"Usually about a fortnight."

"Well, I'll tell you something. This time it won't last for twenty-four hours."

"Go on, please," Grant begged.

"There'll be a most unholy row," the Admiral confided. "The only two countries who have kept to their program are yours and mine. France has built past her allotted number of submarines, and, to be frank, we've winked at it. Germany and Russia between them, as you found out, have kept on exchanging ships and building ships for one another till even the experts can't keep pace with conditions. If you take my advice, Slattery—and they tell me you've got the ear of your Government—you'll cable home and urge your Administration with all the eloquence you can pump out of your brain, to accept Yeovil's invitation and join the Pact and fight it out with the Senate afterwards.

"You people have got lots of the right stuff in you, I know, and you can't believe that anything on God's earth could hurt you; but take it from me, there's a hell of a lot of trouble brewing. Get 'em to sign on to the Pact, Slattery. We shall have a finger in the pie then, anyway."

"I went straight back to Washington from Monte Carlo," Grant confided, "and I can assure you that I have done my best. The trouble of it is—just as you pointed out a few minutes ago—there's a propaganda going on over there which one can't deal with, unless something happens which will drive the truth home to the people. That fellow Cornelius Blum has founded an organization with branches in every city in the United States, and that organization exists primarily to stop America joining the Pact, and secondly, I am convinced, for her destruction. The press has been tampered with. Blum has even succeeded in buying the *New York*."

"But surely your Government can't be absolutely blind to what's going on?"

"They've only just begun to realize it," Grant assured his companion. "That's why for this visit they've given me an official status. If the vote were taken today, I think the Senate would reject the proposal to join the Pact by a majority of three to one."

The Admiral nodded sympathetically. "It's a filthy business," he said. "I hate this underground work, myself. All the same, you don't need to worry. When you people really are waked up, it doesn't take you long to get going, and the first few hours of the Limitation of Armaments Conference will send all Cornelius Blum's propaganda sky-high."

"I must say you put heart into a man," Grant declared gratefully.

The Admiral rose with a glance at the door and a welcoming smile.

"Well," he said, "here comes the young lady who's taken the heart out of a great many of us. Lady Susan, we've made free with Arthur's room and we've drunk his whisky. I don't know what's going to happen to us. My only excuse is that your father told me off to have a chat with Mr. Slattery."

She laughed. "Why should you need an excuse? There isn't a room in the house where you're not welcome, Admiral. I was scouting round with Arthur to see if there were any shirkers from the dancing room. We're so short of men. And, Mr. Slattery, my father wishes to see you before you leave."

"I'm quite at his service," Grant replied, rising.

BY SOME means or other the thing he had so greatly desired came to pass—he was left a few yards behind with Susan. She neither avoided nor sought this contingency. She walked by his side, humming slightly to herself, entirely at her ease.

"Lady Susan," he began, with less than his usual confidence, "may I remind you of our parting at Monte Carlo, of something I said to you?"

She looked at him with slightly uplifted eyebrows.

"I should consider your doing so in atrociously bad taste," she answered.

He winced a little. Perhaps she saw that he was really suffering. Perhaps that love of fair play which was so strong in her rebelled against the idea of any possible misunderstanding. She slackened her pace. She made sure they were well out of hearing of the other two.

"I detest hearsay evidence," she said. "I shall ask you a question. A terrible thing to do, I suppose, but I shall ask it all the same. Did the Princess von Diss accompany you on your yacht from Monte Carlo to America?"

"She did," Grant admitted.

"And was she not also a passenger on the steamer from which you landed yesterday?"

"She was, but—"

"Please do not go on, Mr. Slattery,"she begged. "I hated asking you these questions, but I was determined that there should be no risk of any misunderstanding. I do not wish to quarrel with you. I found you a very pleasant companion at Monte Carlo. I hope that we shall continue friends. We can only do so if you will remember that, although I do not think that I am a prude, I should consider any reference to that conversation at Monte Carlo as an insult. . . . Angela dear, what luck to meet you here! I want to present Mr. Grant Slattery, who is dying to dance—Lady Angela Brooks. Mr. Slattery is an American, Angela, and I will vouch for his dancing. He used to try to teach me complications, but I am not nimble enough. And, Angie, I don't think you'd better lose your heart to Mr. Slattery. He makes love to single ladies most fluently, but he runs away with the married ones. I never thanked you for your roses, Mr. Slattery. Good night, all of you. I must go back to my post of duty."

Grant offered his arm to the very pretty girl who had been introduced.

GRANT was fully aware, on the afternoon before his return, that he had brought his mission to a most successful conclusion. The English press was receiving the attacks upon Lord Yeovil and his invitation with good-humored magnanimity. He had collected more evidence—evidence of a very sinister nature—as to the brooding air of unrest which everywhere prevailed, and, in view of certain contingencies, firmly fixed in his own mind but only half believed in by other people, he had obtained pledges of the utmost value and importance. Yet, so far as he personally was concerned, he knew that his visit had been a failure. The more he thought of it the more he became convinced that its failure had been inevitable, that his advertised delinquencies could have been looked upon in no other way. And yet he smarted under the judgment.

In Bond Street that afternoon, he heard his name pronounced by a woman alighting from a motor-car just in front of him. He recognized her with some difficulty. It was indeed Gertrude looking entirely her old self.

"Still in London," he remarked, as he stood by her side for a moment.

"Still here," she assented. "I had orders to wait—to meet my husband."

"Your husband!"

She smiled with faint irony. "My husband. Are you surprised? He arrives today. He is quite excited at the idea of seeing me again."

"I can hardly believe it," Grant observed, a little bewildered.

"But you," she went on, "you have not the appearance of amusing yourself at all. You are worn to a shadow, my dear Grant. Why do you worry so about this little game of politics? Believe me, for all your efforts, the world will be very much the same in five or ten years' time."

"The philosophy of sloth," he reminded her, smiling.

"Perhaps so. But you seem, indeed, very miserable," she continued, studying him for a moment. "What is the matter? Are your love affairs going badly?"

"I have no love affair," he answered.

She looked at him a moment searchingly, and her lips slowly parted. She laughed—laughed the more as his frown deepened.

"You poor man!" she exclaimed. "And after all your sacrifices! Perhaps it was not so much of a sacrifice, though," she went on, glancing unconsciously at her reflection in the plate-glass window of the shop in front of which they were standing. "I suppose I have gone off. What do you think, Grant?"

"You looked ill on the steamer," he told her. "Today you look as well as you ever have done in your life."

"I hope I do," she murmured.

He broke away from the subject.

"May I take it, then," he asked, "that you and your husband are reconciled?"

"WE ARE about to be," she admitted. "It is very amusing. I made the first overtures, or rather Mr. Cornelius Blum made them on my behalf. He pleaded my cause most eloquently. I have been given to understand that I am forgiven. My husband arrives today. We are staying at the Ritz. I think I will not ask you to call."

She saw the displeasure in his face. For a moment she faltered. She was gripping her little gold purse tightly with the fingers of her left hand.

"I seem to you flippant?" she went on. "Well—you must make allowances for me. This is not exactly the happiest day of my life. I suppose really I should look for happiness in other ways—trying to do good, and all that sort of thing. If I were to play the much admired part of long-suffering heroine in the cinema romance of life, I should, of course, put on my plainest clothes, wait mysteriously upon your young ingénue, confess the whole truth to her at the cost of my own undying humiliation, and not leave her until I had shown her the truth. Then I should telephone you. You would leap into a taxi and drive to Yeovil House. I should take a last look at your photograph and an overdose of veronal. Curtain to slow music!"

Grant's feelings had suddenly changed. He realized the state of strain in which she was.

"You're talking a great deal of nonsense, Gertrude," he said. "I am glad to have seen you. I am glad to hear your news. If I may be allowed to say so, I wish you happiness. I wish that I could have had a share in bringing it to you."

He passed on a little abruptly, and Gertrude made her delayed entrance into the establishment where hovering satellites had been eagerly awaiting her. To Grant, the interview had been, in its way, a painful one. From a material point of view, Gertrude's reconciliation with her husband was certainly the best thing that could have happened to her. Yet, during the whole of their conversation, he had been conscious of her misery. The meeting, notwithstanding a certain sense of relief which it brought him, had only increased his depression. He strolled on without any particular idea as to where he was going. At the corner of Bond Street and Piccadilly he heard a familiar voice and felt a friendly hand upon his shoulder.

"Why so woebegone, my young friend? You ought to be up in the seventh heaven to think of all the excitement you are causing."

Grant was suddenly down again in the world of real things. He shook hands heartily with his new friend.

"Good morning, Admiral," he said. "Do I look as though I were indulging in a fit of the blues?"

"If I hadn't been a brave man," Sullivan declared, "—we're all brave in the navy!—I wouldn't have ventured to speak to you. Come along and lunch."

Grant hesitated. His companion took him by the arm.

"Ritz grill room—my favorite corner table," he insisted. "We ought to have heaps to talk about—except that I am too hungry to talk at all. I've been up since five o'clock on your business—in the Marconi room at the Admiralty, most of the time."

"Any news?"

"Not much that's fresh, anyway. We're getting things into shape for the moment we receive word from Washington. There's a Cabinet Council today, you know. Lucky some of our friends can't get hold of the agenda. We should have the whole world by its ears tomorrow."

THEY descended the stair and remained for a moment in the lounge of the grill room, while Sullivan ordered luncheon from an attentive maître d'hôtel.

"I brought you here instead of the club," Sullivan resumed, "because all the fellows would want to meet you and talk, and we're not loquacious just at present, except to one another."

"Very thoughtful of you," Grant approved. "I had an idea that you might be coming across with us."

"Can't be done. We shall work the show from here. All the same, I must confess I had rather be in Washington. Have you sent that cable?"

"I've sent one a yard long. The trouble is, the Government is pretty well convinced

already. It's the voters we want to get at. What I'm afraid of all the time is that the trouble will commence before the President has been empowered to sign."

The Admiral rose to his feet in reply to a summons from the maître d'hôtel and led his guest toward the table which had been prepared for them.

"Don't worry too much about that, young fellow," he rejoined cheerfully. "I'm a sailor, not a politician, but I can see my hand before my face in the daylight. If half the members of the Pact go on the rampage—well, I shouldn't be surprised if the other half didn't follow suit. Now then, sit in that corner and try an English lobster."

"Another thing that rather puzzles me," Grant remarked, as they proceeded with their luncheon, "is why our friends, the enemy, should have chosen for their enterprise the year in which England is policing the Asiatic seas on behalf of the Limitation of Armaments Committee. If it had been Germany's year, for instance, they could have done what they liked."

"Well, there are two reasons for that," his companion explained. "The first is that the most important year, so far as secrecy is concerned, was last year, when some of their phantom ships were actually slid down. Last year, as you know, Germany policed the whole of the eastern waters and reported everything O.K. Then, their second reason, no doubt, is that England polices very strongly, and it means at least two capital ships and subsidiary craft detached from the main fleet. They think they've got rid of those units in case, by any chance, we should break the Pact and intervene. As a matter of fact, we have made a few changes," he went on, lowering his tone. "Our best battleship and three destroyers are on their way home now. Australia's replacing them for us."

"I am going to ask you the most improper question a person in my position could ask a person in yours," Grant declared. "If the German fleet entered the Atlantic steaming westward, before America had had time to join the Pact, should you interfere?"

Sullivan grinned merrily. "The politicians have to decide that," he reminded his guest. "But a look around our naval ports today would probably surprise you."

"How would your strength work out?"

"A trifle to their advantage on paper," the Admiral admitted, "if you count the Russians in. But there might be a little difficulty about Russia keeping her appointment. They have just been served with a notice to receive a police patrol of inspection for a report to the Limitation of Armaments Committee. They will either have to show their hand or stay in their harbor. I am a terribly pig-headed and prejudiced Britisher, and I swear by our own forces, but the French submarines have gone one or two ahead of us. I had sooner face the devil himself than the flotilla which is collecting in Cherbourg harbor."

Grant's eyes flashed for a moment. "You mean that France—"

"Pooh! My dear fellow, I don't mean anything," Sullivan interrupted. "I'm a sailor, not a politician. But I'll tell you this. France is very often misjudged. Thirty years ago the world thought her self-centered, selfish, neurotic. So would any of us have been after what she went through. You wait. Jove! There's our hostess of last night. Ripping, isn't she? She'll be the *partie* of the season."

GRANT was conscious of a queer presentiment as he stopped to speak with Cornelius Blum on the first day out from Southampton. Blum was occupying his usual suite and was lying in splendid isolation on his own little portion of the deck. He had come on board the day before, to all appearances his usual self. Now, within twenty-four hours, he was again writhing in misery. There was something in his look, as he glanced up at Grant, which touched the latter.

"Sit down and talk to me for a minute, my young enemy," he invited. "The doctor tried to tell me that part of this seasickness is nervousness. One should seek distraction, he says. Tell me how you succeeded in London."

"Admirably," Grant replied, accepting his invitation. "But I'm not going to cure your seasickness by telling you my secrets."

Cornelius Blum smiled faintly. "You're a nice lad," he said. "Pity you aren't a German. I'd have made a great man of you."

"I am very glad I am not a German."

"Why?"

Grant shrugged his shoulders. "Well,"

he pointed out, "of course every nation has its characteristics, bad and good. Your people are industrious, domesticated, subject to discipline, and full of courage. On the other hand they are the most egregiously selfish and egotistical race upon the face of the earth. It is Germany first, and let any one else exist that may. That is what I don't like about your people."

Cornelius Blum did not reply for a moment. "It may seem so to the world," he conceded presently. "You see, we are a nation of individualists."

"Why are you alone?" Grant inquired after a moment's pause.

The troubled look returned to Blum's face. "A chapter of accidents has befallen me," he explained. "Müller, my body-servant, and Felix, my secretary, who came over with me, missed the boat at Southampton. Both were executing commissions for me late in London, and I sent them down by car. They had an accident, twelve miles from Guildford, and both were too injured to continue the journey."

Grant murmured a few words of sympathy and presently departed. On the deck he met Lord Yeovil, with whom he turned and walked.

"Blum seems to be quite ill," he said.

"Unfortunately men do not die of seasickness," the other rejoined. "It sounds a brutal thing to say, I suppose, but, in my opinion, it would be a great benefit to the world if Blum were to be removed from it. I have come to the conclusion within the last few weeks, Slattery, that, more than any other man living, Cornelius Blum represents the spirit of warfare and unrest. He is the personification of all that is evil in the German system. I can quite believe your story that he carries with him day and night a famous letter of hate, inscribed by his father on his death-bed. He not only carries the letter, but he carries the spirit."

"One is so often tempted to like the man," Grant remarked. "And yet I know that you're right. If all that we suspect of his intrigues in America is true, he is a very terrible person. I hope Lady Susan is keeping well. I haven't seen her about."

"SHE is playing deck tennis forward," her father replied. "A pleasant game but a trifle energetic for this warm weather. Lutrecht and his faithful henchman, von Diss, are playing écarté in the smoke room. Did you know, Slattery, that von Diss was to be one of the German entourage?"

"I had no idea of it," Grant answered hastily and with perfect truth. "I met the Princess in Bond Street the day before we sailed and she told me that her husband was arriving in London that afternoon. She gave me no idea that it was for the purpose of proceeding to the States or that she was accompanying him."

"They keep their secrets well, these Germans," Lord Yeovil mused. "They have method and reticence. I must go and spend my usual hour with Arthur. I don't think I ever had such a mass of material to master in my life—pretty terrible, some of it, too."

Grant strolled on and threw himself into a chair close to the rail. "Method and reticence!" He thought for a moment of Cleo's whispered words. If they were true —and he had never doubted them—the whole secret of the poisonous domestic conspiracy, as much to be dreaded as any avalanche of foreign aggression, was contained in two small volumes—neat, they would be; precise, they would be; venomous, they would surely be—and never so nearly within his grasp as now. He fell to studying the ethics of the much debated problem of justification by result. Cornelius Blum, at the present moment, was probably more helpless than he would ever be again. Was it worth the risk of failure, the plan that was slowly forming itself in his mind?

Von Diss, very neat and dapper in white flannel trousers and blue serge coat of nautical cut, came up and touched Grant on the arm. He always made a show of being very friendly with the man he hated.

"I saw you talking to our friend, Cornelius Blum," he said. "His condition puzzles me. It is a terrible thing to suffer so from such a simple cause. Incomprehensible, too! He enjoys sailing as much as any man, and yet directly he gets on a big steamer, he collapses altogether."

"He was very ill coming over," Grant remarked. "Yet he was himself again the night after landing. His speech at the Whitehall Rooms was an admirable production."

Von Diss nodded. "He is not old," he went on, half to himself. "He is a strong man. His mentality is amazing. Yet this

simple illness seems to have thrown him into a strange disorder. I made a harmless request to him this morning, and he ordered me away."

"A harmless request!" Grant felt a sudden inspiration. "A harmless request!" Bearing in mind Cornelius Blum's unprotected state, von Diss had probably asked for the care of the casket or that it be deposited in the ship's safe. It was a perfectly reasonable suggestion.

"I expect you will find him better tomorrow," Grant observed. "The Princess is, I trust, not suffering?"

"She is a little tired, but she has no mal-de-mer," her husband replied. "I go now to fetch her. Presently I shall talk to our friend, Cornelius Blum, again."

He wandered off and Grant made his way to where the deck tennis was proceeding. He sat down and watched the players for a time. Presently, without noticing who her neighbor was, Susan came and shared his seat. She gave a little start as he spoke and made an involuntary movement. Grant rose at once to his feet.

"Pray let me go away," he begged. "I am sorry that you find my presence so utterly distasteful."

He was angry with himself directly he had spoken. She only laughed at him and settled herself down more comfortably.

"Don't be absurd," she said lightly. "Only I didn't happen to notice who was sitting here. Don't you play any of these games?"

"Sometimes."

"We're having a competition," she confided. "So far Charles Suffolk and I have beaten everybody. Oh, I must go!" she added, slipping off. "I see there is another couple ready for us."

He watched her for a moment or two and turned away. He tried other parts of the ship, but some fascination seemed to draw him always back to that little enclosed space where Cornelius Blum lay with half-closed eyes. He had lost a great deal of his natural color and seemed somehow to have shrunken. Grant hesitated at the round glass door for a moment or two, wondering whether or not to enter. Then he realized that Blum was asleep. He stooped down, withdrew the key from the lock of the door, and placed it in his pocket. Afterward, he walked away.

After resisting the impulse at least half a dozen times, Grant finally found his way, after dinner that evening, to the dancing deck aft. It was a very beautifully arranged space, given over in the daytime to various games, and at night covered with a specially prepared floor for dancing. The windows opened all the way round, and in hot weather the roof rolled back. From one of the window seats he watched for some little time. Susan was, as usual, surrounded by admirers.

He turned away and walked out on to the open deck. There was nothing more to be done. He was in a hopeless position. There was nothing he could say to her, no complaint he could make, no excuse he could offer. He drew a wicker chair to the side of the rail, threw himself down, lit a pipe, and began to smoke. Somehow or other, the tobacco tasted wrong, even the beauty of the night seemed to increase his depression. Presently he left off smoking, leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. They were playing a waltz he used to dance with Susan. He lay still and listened.

Susan, crossing the deck in search of her father, discovered him in conversation with the Prince and Princess von Diss. She stopped and was half inclined to retreat. Gertrude, however, had already turned toward her.

"Lady Susan," she said, "I was just sending my husband to look for you. Will you come and sit with me for a moment?"

Susan glanced meaningly toward her father, who she had been told was looking for her. He mistook her appeal for help and smiled acquiescence.

"Do, Susan," he enjoined. "I only sent for you to say that I was going to the smoke room. Von Diss and I will finish our little discussion there."

Gertrude led the way toward a distant corner where there were two comfortable chairs. Susan walked by her side, apparently at her ease, but inwardly fuming. There was something about this woman which always made her feel young and unformed.

"OF COURSE, my dear Lady Susan Gertrude began, "I know that you detest having to talk to me. But you see it really can't be helped. My husband is meeting your father officially, and, so long as my husband has decided to make me

so, I am a perfectly respectable woman."

"I have had very little experience in the ethics of such matters," Susan replied. "I am content as a rule to follow my own judgment."

Gertrude settled herself quite comfortably in her chair.

"Ah, well," she sighed. "You're very young. It is just your youth which makes your judgment so absurd. You're very angry with Mr. Grant Slattery, aren't you?"

"Whatever my feelings may be with regard to Mr. Slattery, or any other man," Lady Susan rejoined quietly, "they concern—if you will forgive my saying so—myself alone."

"Very foolish," Gertrude murmured. "Listen to me, please. Poor Grant! He really is in a ridiculous position. If there weren't just a spice of tragedy attached to the situation, I am sure I should never accept the rôle of obvious idiot which seems thrust upon me."

"I hope you're not going to offer me any confidences," Susan begged. "I do not desire them."

"My dear Lady Prig, you're going to hear what is good for you," Gertrude continued calmly. "You can't get up and leave me, because I am an older woman, and it would be very rude of you. You probably think that when Mr. Slattery said good-by to you in Monte Carlo he knew that I was going to America with him. Well, the poor man didn't know anything of the sort."

"He didn't know?" Susan repeated incredulously. "Why, it was the night before—"

"Precisely," Gertrude acquiesced. "You see, I was very fond of Grant Slattery, and I couldn't quite believe that he had lost all feeling for me. Sheer vanity, of course—for which I suffered. I knew quite well that if I had asked him to take me away he would have refused point-blank—because I had already asked him and he had refused—but I wanted to go away with him and I took a risk. I went on board his yacht as a stowaway. He hadn't the faintest idea that I was there until the yacht was a day and a half out. He wouldn't have known, even then, if I hadn't nearly fainted from hunger."

Susan sat quite still for a moment. She was struggling to emulate her companion's composure.

"It sounds incredible," she murmured.

"It is the truth, nevertheless," Gertrude assured her. "When I disclosed myself, he was aghast. He took no pains to hide from me the fact that my presence there was utterly undesired. For some time he considered landing me at Gibraltar. That, however, would have made the matter no better from any point of view, and I suppose he realized that it would have been a particularly brutal act. So he let me stay. He had to."

THERE was a pause. Gertrude seemed to be listening to the music. Suddenly she recommenced.

"Of course, the rest of the story is absurd, as well as being humiliating. Why I tell it to you, I really don't know. I made an idiot of myself in the usual way, and I forced Grant into the usual hopeless position. I suppose because he was in love with you, he played Sir Galahad for some time with almost ridiculous perfection. Then one night we ran into a terrible storm. I was frightened and Grant—he is really very kind-hearted—began to realize that he had been hurting me badly every moment of the time.

"I became emotional and finally desperate. I will spare you the rest of the story—but I gave Grant no chance. Afterward, I understood how hideously one-sided love can be. If I had wronged my husband, I paid for it, in the suffering of those three days before I could get him to land me in Newport. I only saw him for a few minutes at meal times and afterward when he used to come and try to make polite conversation to me, but the whole affair was ghastly. I had done the most absurd thing a woman could possibly attempt. I had tried to secure for myself a man who was in love with another woman.

"There were those hours I spoke of during the storm. After that—nothing. I did not see Grant again until we met by accident on the steamer coming back to England. I had been ill in a little country place in New Hampshire and he had had no idea even of where I was. I wonder whether you would be very kind now and go and ask my husband to give me his arm. I think we must be somewhere near the screw. I am beginning to feel the motion."

Susan rose to her feet. Something in her expression warned Gertrude.

"My dear child!" she exclaimed. "If you say a single word of what I can see in your face, I shall scream. I am an impossible person who has told you an impossible story for an impossible reason. Please do as I ask you."

Susan conveyed his wife's message to the Prince. Then, for a moment, she hesitated. Two or three young men moved toward her but she waved them away.

"In a minute," she called out. "I am coming back."

She walked out on the open part of the deck. A few yards away Grant was still seated, gazing gloomily across the sea. She drew nearer and nearer to his chair. He heard the sound of her hesitating footsteps and turned around. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. He could scarcely believe his eyes. She was smiling at him, a little plaintively, with just a touch of appeal about her mouth.

"I was stupid, Grant," she whispered. "Would you care to dance this?"

"Susan!" he exclaimed.

"Very stupid, indeed," she went on. "Let's have a good long dance as we used to and then do something terribly obvious—go and look at the bows or something."

He had sense enough to ask no questions, to accept what came to him. Gertrude watched them for a moment as she passed along, leaning on her husband's arm.

"Really," she remarked, "I suppose the papers are right when they call that young woman beautiful. I used to think she lacked expression."

The Prince looked at the young couple through his horn-rimmed eyeglass.

"She does very well," he agreed. "They have the looks, these young Englishwomen, and the figure—sometimes the wit. They move all the time, though, in a very narrow world."

Gertrude continued her walk.

"I suppose the stony and narrow way has its compensations," she sighed.

THE *Sefalonia* was due in New York on Wednesday morning, and on Tuesday night Grant and Susan sat on deck together until almost eleven o'clock. Susan glanced at her watch reluctantly.

"If this voyage were going on any longer, Grant," she said, "I should have to tell people that we were engaged, in self-defense. We really do such outrageous things. Do you know that I didn't dance with any one else tonight?"

"I know that I am getting very unpopular," Grant observed, smiling, "and curiously enough, I don't care a bit."

"Nor do I," she agreed.

"The one thing I am glad about," he went on, "is that we are approaching a country which has most civilized ideas as regards matrimonial arrangements. No putting banns up and waiting three weeks and that sort of thing."

"You don't suppose I'm going to be married over here, do you?" Susan exclaimed.

"I am hoping so," he replied patiently. "I thought a quiet little wedding in Washington would round off the proceedings there—if we are any of us left alive."

"You've some very serious work to do first, Grant," she reminded him.

"Very," he assented. "So has your father. Mine may lead me into more trouble, perhaps, but your father's is the greater responsibility. I don't think there is another man in the world who would be able to handle the situation he will have to meet in a few days. There is a terrible crisis closing upon us, Susan."

"The thought of it makes our little affairs seem almost unimportant, doesn't it?" she sighed.

He leaned over and kissed her.

"Just for luck," he said.

On his way to his stateroom, Grant passed the entrance to Cornelius Blum's suite. He raised the curtain. The steward was seated outside the closed door.

"How's Mr. Blum tonight?" he inquired.

"He's been a little easier, I think, sir," the man replied.

"I wonder whether he'd like to see me?"

"I don't think I'd disturb him, sir. He's locked the door and he seems quite quiet now."

"Are you going to sit there all night?"

"Mr. Blum's giving me ten dollars a night not to move, in case he wants me. The chief steward's put another man on to look after some of my rooms. Lucky I'm used to sleeping in a chair."

"Good night," Grant said.

"Good night, sir."

Grant made his way to his own stateroom, exchanged his patent shoes for some dark-colored ones with rubber soles, his dinner

jacket for a blue serge coat which buttoned close to his throat, slipped the latest thing in automatics into his pocket, and went up on deck again, but by a roundabout way. It was nearly midnight now, and only a few people were still in evidence. He drew a chair into the recess close up against the glass-enclosed space in front of Blum's suite and waited until one by one they dispersed and he was entirely alone. Then he rose to his feet, opened the sliding door to which he had the key, and found himself in the little sheltered portion of the deck allotted to the suite. The door opening into the outer room was left upon a hook. There was no sound to be heard inside, although a light was burning. Softly he lifted the hook and peered in. The apartment was evidently the sitting-room of the suite and was untenanted. He stepped inside and listened. Opposite to him was another door, also on the hook, leading to the sleeping-room, from which a thin gleam of light shone.

He approached it noiselessly. There was still no sound to be heard, not even the breathing of a sleeping man. For some seconds he paused, puzzled by the unbroken silence; then slowly, and with the utmost care, he lifted the hook and pushed the door open, inch by inch. At last the opening was wide enough to admit the upper part of his body. He leaned forward and stood quite still, gripping the side of the door. The bed was empty, although in disorder. Cornelius Blum was seated on a chair before a round table, leaning forward, his head resting upon his arms. He was wearing a heavy dressing-gown over his pajamas, and was apparently in an extraordinarily deep sleep. His left hand was stretched across the table, and gripped between its fingers was the end of a chain, and some keys. A few inches farther away still was a box of dull yellow metal.

The seconds crept on. He stepped into the room, hooked the door again, and drew nearer and nearer to the silent figure. Then, as he bent over it, a new horror faced him. He forgot for a moment the great object of his search—forgot that the secrets of a world's salvation were there within his grasp. He stooped down to peer into the stricken face. Human nature, all his powers of restraint, failed him. He gave a little cry. It was a terrible thing to look thus into the face of a dead man. He recovered himself at once. The cry, he realized, had been almost fatal. The steward outside had heard him.

There was a heavy knocking at the door. He took no notice. The knocking continued. Then Grant made the effort of his life. He seized the stiffened fingers and dragged from them the end of the chain, unbuttoned the other end from the belt underneath the pajama jacket, slipped it into his pocket and took the casket into his hands. With stealthy footsteps he stole away, unhooked the door and hooked it again, crossed the sitting-room, reached the little glass-enclosed deck, passed through on to the main deck, and went staggering toward the farther end. He stood for a moment in the wind to recover himself.

They were making about thirty knots an hour through a tumbling sea with little showers of spray thrown glittering into the air. Grant felt the sting of them on his face, and in a moment he was himself again. He walked round the bows, descended the gangway from the other side and hurried to Lord Yeovil's suite. There was still a light in the sitting-room. He knocked at the door and entered. Lord Yeovil, half undressed, was finishing a whisky and soda. He looked at the intruder without saying a word. Grant slipped the bolt through the door.

"I've got it," he announced breathlessly. "I've got the casket and the key. I want you to put it at once into one of the official boxes."

"Any struggle?" Lord Yeovil asked.

"None," was the awe-stricken reply, "but it was horrible all the same. Cornelius Blum is dead."

THERE was pandemonium on the *Sefalonia* for the last four hours before she reached dock. The tragedy of a death on shipboard was deepened by the fact that Cornelius Blum, who had consistently declined to allow any doctor to examine him, had shown no signs of the heart disease which had ended his life so abruptly. But apart from the tragedy itself there were two men on the steamer, Prince Lutrecht and Prince von Diss, whom the event seemed to have reduced to an almost hysterical state. The captain scarcely knew how to deal with the situation which their importunities created.

They refused even to leave his room. Their persistence was becoming intolerable.

"Commander," Prince Lutrecht said, earnestly, "you are an Englishman, and I know that you are a lover of fair play. I tell you that last night there was stolen from Cornelius Blum's room a casket containing political documents of the most vital importance to the future of the world. Those documents, if they fell into the wrong hands, might lead to a terrible and disastrous war. They were carried about by Cornelius Blum in defiance of our wishes and it might very well be that he has met with his death in defending them. But they have been stolen and are, at the present moment, concealed upon this ship, and I appeal to you, as the one responsible person here, to assist us in finding them."

"But what can I do, Prince?" the captain expostulated. "I have nine hundred and seventy-five passengers on board. Do you wish every one of them searched?"

"Not every one," Prince Lutrecht replied. "The person who must be responsible for this robbery is Mr. Grant Slattery. He and Cornelius Blum were enemies, yet he was always stopping to speak to him. He learned the way into his suite. Without a doubt Slattery was the thief."

"I have already done more than I have any right to do in that matter," the commander pointed out. "I have had Mr. Grant Slattery's room searched. Besides, the steward saw him going down into his stateroom at a reasonable hour. I cannot see the slightest evidence against the young man."

"He has probably passed the casket on to some one," Prince von Diss declared. "We must insist upon having the staterooms and baggage of his friends searched."

"Including, I presume, the belongings of Lord Yeovil?" the commander asked with a patient smile.

"The casket must be found," Prince Lutrecht persisted.

"GENTLEMEN," the commander said, "I will discuss the matter with my officers and see whether any search in conjunction with the Customs examination can be effected. I tell you frankly that, so far as regards the personal and official luggage of the Prime Minister of my country, I should not allow it to be touched. You must excuse me. We shall be taking up the pilot within half an hour."

"Captain," Prince Lutrecht announced in desperation, "I am prepared to give a reward of one million dollars for the recovery of that casket and its contents."

"There is no harm in announcing that," was the cold reply. "You must excuse me now. I have my duties to attend to."

Nothing happened. No discovery was made. As the great steamer backed up to her place alongside the dock, she was boarded by a small army of detectives, members of the police force and journalists. The Custom House officials, miraculously worked into a state of intense excitement, made almost savage onslaughts upon the general baggage. There was a rumor—many people declared they had seen it in black and white—that a million dollars would be paid for a small casket of dull yellow metal which had been stolen on board the *Sefalonia*. Grant Slattery—who was met by Hodson—Lord Yeovil and Susan, were among the earliest to pass the customs. They all drove together toward the hotel in Park Avenue at which the Yeovils were to spend the night before going on to Washington. Half-way there, Hodson, who had been looking out of the little window behind, redirected the driver.

"We are being followed," he said, "by at least two taxicabs. I have told him to drive to Police Headquarters. It is the only safe place for an hour or so. Sorry to detain you and your daughter, Lord Yeovil, but if we had gone on to the hotel, there would only have been some shooting on the sidewalk. There'll be some trouble here, but we'll do it on the rush."

The only luggage they had with them was two official-looking black boxes which had not been subjected to search and were inside the car with them.

"Which one?" Hodson asked.

Grant touched the box nearest him with his foot. Hodson picked it up.

"It is just three steps across the sidewalk," he said. "Even if they wing me, I'll get there. Don't let the young lady move. We won't hang round many seconds. They'll probably try a rush."

Susan passed her arm through Grant's.

"You must stay and protect me," she insisted.

He patted her hand. The light of battle was in his eyes.

"It may take both of us to get that safely inside," he warned her.

They swung round the last corner. Hodson held the box under his arm. Grant, with his automatic in his right hand, crouched by his side. Before they had drawn up against the curb, Hodson had flung the door open and made his spring. A taxicab from behind came crashing into the back of their car, without, however, doing serious damage. Hodson, quick on his feet, was half-way across the sidewalk before the first shot was fired. He staggered for a moment, and Grant, rushing past him, snatched the box from under his arm, and, bending low, dashed past the astonished bystanders, into the shelter of the building. Hodson stumbled after him. Policemen and detectives came running up, closing around them.

"Get those fellows in the taxicabs, if you can," Hodson cried, stooping down to feel his leg. "Green and his gang, by the looks of them. This way, Grant."

They penetrated into the heart of the building, Hodson limping slightly from the effect of a bullet which had grazed his shin bone.

Grant left Police Headquarters half an hour later to find Lord Yeovil and Susan still waiting. They drove off toward the hotel, and Grant at once unburdened himself.

"It is the most amazing scheme that's ever been conceived," he declared. "Scores of names in every city in the United States, every one with their exactly assigned task on an exactly stipulated day. They all had their station, all their peculiar functions—Brooklyn Bridge, for instance, would have been blown up the day the German fleet appeared in sight. So far as we could see, there wouldn't have been an important bridge left in the country. The Japanese program out West was worse. There will be more than two hundred arrests today. There will be trouble in the city tonight, though, if the news gets about."

They arrived at the hotel.

"You're staying here, Grant?" Lord Yeovil inquired.

Grant shook his head.

"I will come and dine, if I may, sir," he replied. "I haven't got a scrap of writing now of any sort, but I'm a marked man. I'm best away from your hotel."

THE opening session of the Limitation of Armaments Conference was held in an environment outwardly calm, but with mutterings of the storm very clearly audible to those who knew something of the real position. The actual surroundings all made for peace—a stately and dignified chamber, with carefully shaded windows, cool white walls, and oaken furniture, massive, and beautiful with age. There were twenty-six representatives present and six secretaries at the side table, among whom Slattery, by special appointment, found a place. He was next to Itash, but the two men exchanged no greetings. At the appointed hour the President entered the room and spoke a few words of welcome. His allusions to the world's desire for peace seemed to contain, perhaps, a faint note of irony; otherwise there was nothing to indicate any foreknowledge of untoward events.

After he had extended his usual formal invitation to luncheon he left the room, and his place was taken by the Secretary of State, who embarked at once upon the proceedings. He declared that on a matter of urgency, he had given permission to the English representative, Lord Yeovil, to make a statement before the agenda were entered upon. There was a little movement, a rustling of papers, as Lord Yeovil, on the right-hand side of the Secretary of State, rose to speak, a slim, dignified figure in the cool, soft light. He spoke slowly and very gravely, and his words seemed chosen to attain to the essence of brevity.

"Mr. Secretary and members of the Conference," he said. "As you know, certain of the Powers have assumed year by year, the duty of policing the waters and lands of the earth, in order to satisfy ourselves that the regulations imposed by you, gentlemen, are dutifully and honorably carried out. I have to present to you a report from the commander of the English flotilla in eastern waters that Japan, by a system of duplication, described in the papers which I have the honor to lay before you, has during this and the preceding year exceeded her allowance of marine tonnage by two hundred and fifty thousand tons, and also that, in the harbor of a port on the Chinese coast, leased to her, or on an adjacent

island, there have been constructed and are now ready to fly, a score of flying ships of a new type, obviously designed for offensive purposes. The papers containing particulars of this divergence from the principles and ordinances of the Conference, I had the honor to hand to Mr. Secretary of State last night, and a copy has, I believe, been prepared for the inspection of each of you."

There was a tense silence. One of the young men from the side table arose, with a little pile of papers in his hand, which he distributed around the table. The Secretary allowed a few minutes to elapse while every one studied the very simple document laid before him, translated in each case into the language of the representative. Then he rose to his feet.

"It is my duty," he said, "to call upon the representative of Japan, his Excellency Prince Yoshimo, to afford us an explanation and reply to this very serious charge."

Itash moved silently from his place and stepped toward the representative of his country, who was also the Ambassador to the United States. Prince Yoshimo rose slowly to his feet. He seemed imperturbable and wholly unembarrassed.

"Mr. Secretary," he said, "and gentlemen. The charge of Lord Yeovil has come as a surprise. I can only say that, as has happened before, a little too much zeal has been shown, a little too great—great—"

"Credulity," Itash whispered.

"—credulity displayed," the Ambassador went on. "The so-called duplicate ships are nothing but coal barges, and the flying boats are for commercial purposes. That is my reply."

Lord Yeovil rose once more to his feet.

"The statement of his Excellency Prince Yoshimo," he announced, "simply contradicts my information."

Once more Prince Yoshimo rose, calm and soft-tongued.

"Mr. Secretary," he said, "I have given you the reply you asked. Let others go and see. Our harbors, and the harbors of any part of the Chinese coast over which we have influence, are free to the vessels of any one of the powers here present."

The Secretary turned to Lord Yeovil, who rose once more to his feet.

"I desire, sir," the latter begged, "a postponement of any further discussion for two days."

THE routine business of the Conference was continued, but it was very hard to secure the close attention of any of the members. The questions which they were called upon to decide seemed of infinitesimal importance compared to the magnitude of the issues which had already been raised. The morning session drifted away, however, and the afternoon session, without further incident. The proceedings terminated about five o'clock. Slattery, leaving the place alone, came face to face with Itash in one of the lobbies. No salutation passed between them, but Itash stopped and the beginning of a smile curved his lips unpleasantly.

"Is this wonderful information," he asked, "part of the babble I am supposed to have talked in my sleep and Mademoiselle Cleo to have repeated?"

"And for repeating which she was murdered?" Grant added.

Itash was unmoved. "I so seldom read the newspapers," he said. "I understood that she had committed suicide. That was quite reasonable. Why not? We each have the right. But you do not answer my question."

"Nor do I intend to," Grant replied. "But I will be very rash indeed and tell you this: It was Mademoiselle Cleo who conveyed to us your fear that Mr. Cornelius Blum yielded too much to sentiment. The deepest vault in his safe-deposit company should have held that little casket of gold!"

Itash drew a queer little breath. It was as though he had been attacked suddenly by asthma. No thunderous exclamation or furious expletive could have contained half the feeling of his simple words, each one detached from the other:

"What—do—you—mean?"

"Ah!" Grant murmured. "Explanations are so tedious. I will leave you a little puzzle with which you may occupy the rest of the day. Prince Lutrecht is sharing your anxiety. So, I think, is Prince von Diss. Very soon you will know."

"The casket contained nothing but the letter of Cornelius Blum, the elder, to his son. A personal letter of no importance."

Grant passed on with a little smile. Itash watched him down the long corridor, watched him disappear. Then he turned back and hurried to the room where Princes Lutrecht and von Diss were still talking.

Slattery spent a wonderful hour in a quiet room of an official building, talking over a private wire to Hodson in New York. Afterward he dined at the British Embassy, where all official entertainment had been postponed. He was able to sit alone with Susan on one of the broad piazzas afterward, watching the rising of the moon, and the fireflies at the bottom of the garden.

"Your father was splendid," he told her. "He said just enough. The day after tomorrow will come—and the bombshell. Hodson has done splendidly, too," he went on. "They have raided thirty or forty places in New York, St. Louis, and even Philadelphia, and discovered documents which afforded them absolute proof. They are trying to keep the press muzzled until after tomorrow. I'm afraid it will be difficult."

"It seems an amazing tangle," she murmured.

"We're making history at express speed," he replied. "I wonder whether we couldn't walk down and see if those really are fireflies."

She rose to her feet, took his arm and they passed down the broad walk, through the ornamental gardens, to the little wood beyond. After which they talked no more of politics.

ON THE Wednesday morning, the day but one after the opening of the Conference, the members assembled at the same time and place, with one notable absentee. At the appointed hour for commencing the proceedings the Secretary of State made a momentous announcement.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have to announce that Prince Yoshimo, the representative of Japan, has sent me formal notice on behalf of his government, that it desires to withdraw from this Conference."

There was a little murmur of excitement. Prince Lutrecht rose to his feet.

"Mr. Secretary, and gentlemen," he began. "I am not in any way an apologist for the action taken by my distinguished confrère on the instigation of his government. On the other hand I must point out to you that the charges brought by Lord Yeovil against the honor of a great nation, publicly, and before you all, were of a nature to provoke most intense and poignant reprisals.

"I regret very much that they were made. I foresee from the retirement of the representative of Japan from this Conference—a retirement which I fear, may be final—a serious blow to its utility. The item upon the agenda for discussion this morning deals, I see, with a supposed secret naval and military understanding between Russia and my country to the exclusion of other members of the Pact. If it is proposed to interfere in any way with the arrangements which I admit exist between the Russian and German naval forces, for joint practise and maneuvers, I desire to tell this meeting at once that I offer my strongest protest and shall follow the example of my friend the Japanese Ambassador, in retiring from participation in the Conference."

Prince Lutrecht resumed his seat. Lord Yeovil glanced toward the Secretary of State. The latter nodded and rose once more.

"I think," he announced, "that Lord Yeovil has a reply to make to Prince Lutrecht, but before we proceed with what is the apparent business of this Conference, I desire to make an unofficial announcement to you all, which you will learn when you leave this room, but which it was the President's wish that you should know of in conjunction with such events as are now taking place. The Japanese Ambassador last night tendered to the Government of the United States a formal demand that all persons of Japanese birth desiring to do so shall be permitted to acquire land and American citizenship on an equality with citizens of other nations."

Monsieur Lafayel, the French representative, for a moment lost his head.

"Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "A declaration of war!"

"My distinguished friend technically anticipates," the Secretary observed. "But the attitude of the United States of America to such a demand is, perhaps, too obvious for any other construction to be placed upon the situation."

Lord Yeovil rose once more to his feet. He looked around the table before he spoke, with the air of one who desires to impress on his mind the memory of a scene destined to become historical. He spoke slowly and with unflurried tone.

"Mr. Secretary, and gentlemen," he said. "I address you once more in reply,

chiefly, to the remarks of my distinguished friend Prince Lutrecht. I speak to you, not only as a representative of Great Britain, but as the representative of the Power chosen in rotation for the duty of policing the seas and enforcing the regulations imposed by this Conference. I have to announce to you that I am in possession of absolute proof of the ill-faith of the seceding nation—Japan—from this organization. I have today received cabled information from the admiral commanding the police forces in eastern waters that he has, in accordance with instructions received, destroyed the four or five battleships built in excess of Japan's rights and also the nest of flying ships lying in the harbor of Yulensk, and built and armed without the cognizance of this Assembly."

It is, perhaps, doubtful, whether spoken words have, at any time, produced a greater effect upon a gathering of men than those of Lord Yeovil. Amazed and half-incredulous interest was the prevailing note. Lutrecht, however, seemed like a man stricken. Every scrap of color left his cheeks. His eyes burned like dry fires. His tongue was perpetually moistening his lips. He seemed to be trying to speak, but he made no effort to rise to his feet.

"Further," Lord Yeovil continued, "and in reply to Prince Lutrecht, I have to inform him that the evidence is that the secret understanding between the naval forces of Germany and Russia is not in accordance with the terms of this Conference, and I have ventured in behalf of the powers with which I am endowed, to anticipate your permission to act according to our statutes. A small portion of the British fleet has surprised the Russian battleships lying at Archangel and, in behalf of the Conference—not, I beg you will understand, in any way on behalf of Great Britain, but acting simply in the interests of all—has taken possession of those ships and disarmed them, pending a satisfactory settlement. I may add that we found them provisioned and ready to sail to join the German fleet at a rendezvous off the north coast of Ireland."

PRINCE LUTRECHT rose a little heavily to his feet. All his effrontery had deserted him.

"Mr. Secretary," he announced, "I have no alternative but to follow the example of his Excellency, the representative of Japan, and sever my allegiance to this Conference."

"A course which I naturally follow," the representative of Russia declared, rising in his place.

"It will cause my country the greatest regret," the chairman said, dryly, "that this Conference, for the inauguration of which America was responsible, and to whose conventions we have zealously and, it seems, at great risk to ourselves been true, exists no longer. But I may add that it is still more to our sorrow that the circumstances of the breaking up of the Conference point clearly to disloyalty on the part of two of the subscribing nations."

Prince Lutrecht made one effort.

"Disloyalty, sir?" he repeated, half turning on his way to the door.

"I regret to have to use that word, Prince," the Secretary observed gravely. "I shall offer no explanation at this time. If you require one, read the press of tonight and tomorrow morning. You will find there bad news. This is the last word."

Lutrecht left the room. The Secretary waited until the door was closed.

"I have no other course, gentlemen," he continued, "painful though it may be, than to declare that this Conference has come automatically to an end until some further understanding can be arrived at among the nations, based upon principles which seem to have been deserted by the representatives of the two seceding Powers. The United States of America must in future guard its own freedom."

There was a rustling of papers, shuffling of feet, and then every one began to talk at once. The Limitation of Armaments Conference ended, as most similar assemblies had done—in a mixture of exaltation, confusion and misunderstanding.

There was a very fateful and wonderful meeting, convened on behalf of his government by the Secretary of State an hour or so later, and attended by Lord Yeovil, Prince Lutrecht and Prince Yoshimo. They met in the Secretary's official room in the White House. No one shook hands; no civilities of any sort were offered. The Secretary himself locked the door.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have asked you to meet me because, whatever our feelings may be, the United States of America, more

than any other country, hates war, deprecates revenge, and seeks for the truest expression of civilization. By a series of fortuitous incidents America has become apprised of the hostile intentions of Japan and Germany. Let me remind you, Prince Lutrecht, that, if you persevere, you are without the aid of the Russian navy, and your fleet will be met, before it enters the Atlantic, by the combined navies of France and England, and probably Italy.

"The fact that, for the moment, America stands outside the Pact has, thanks, to the generous instincts of the nations of the world, been ignored by them, in the face of recent discoveries. You, Prince Lutrecht, have lost that superiority of naval forces by means of which you intended to inflict disaster upon our people. If your fleet sails it will be met by the American fleet in its entirety, and I imagine that, under the present conditions, the advantage in material would rest slightly with us. The schemes you produced for disorganizing the mentality of our country have been discovered and dealt with. Fifty citizens of this country—some of them citizens of repute—are today in jail. Five hundred more are under police surveillance. The points of danger from New York to San Francisco, which it was their duty to attack, have been guarded and will be guarded. Now, gentlemen, you have heard what I have to say. Are you going through with your abortive schemes? If so, you can have your papers within half an hour."

AMAZING man of an amazing race, Prince Yoshimo bowed.

"There have been many misunderstandings," he said. "Japan, too, loves peace. I think, in the circumstances, I can anticipate my Imperial Master's decision. I desire to withdraw the documents I had the honor to present to the Government of the United States yesterday."

"And I," Prince Lutrecht added, "desire to assure you, and through you, your Government, that gross exaggeration has been used in describing the attitude and aims of my country. It seems to be the hard fate of Germany to be continually striving for peace and to be always suspected of bellicosity. I offer the fullest pledges of our peaceful intentions. On behalf of my Government, I acquiesce in the cessation of the understanding between Russia and ourselves. I declare for peace."

The Secretary bowed. "This," he pronounced, "is not the place or the hour to discuss the future. The Limitation of Armaments Conference has ceased to exist. The Pact, I imagine, must be either reconstructed or dissolved; full account must be taken of the dangerous position in which your two countries, gentlemen, have placed the peace of the world. That, I think, is all we can say at present."

Prince Lutrecht bowed. Prince Yoshimo followed his example. They left the room together, undismayed, with little apparent loss of dignity. Lord Yeovil accepted a cigarette and lit it thoughtfully.

"Queer brains, some of these people," he observed.

The Secretary smiled. "What about a cocktail and some luncheon?" he suggested. "The chief would like to see you."

Lord Yeovil glanced at his watch.

"I am taking a day off," he announced. "And, by the by, I shall have to hurry. My daughter is being married to Grant Slattery at one o'clock, and we have a little family party afterward at the Embassy. Your wife will have received a note by now. I hope we may have the pleasure of seeing you both."

"I am quite sure that you can count upon us," the other replied, heartily. "Let me offer you at once, however, my best wishes for your daughter's happiness. Grant Slattery is a fine fellow. Only a few of us will ever know how much our country owes to him for his work during the last two years."

"Not only your country, but the world," Lord Yeovil acquiesced. "War brings equal disaster to victor and vanquished."

"A relic of the Middle Ages," the American statesman declared, "in which the victors sometimes derived an illusory benefit from the simple fact that international commerce consisted merely of a primitive attempt at barter, and the complication of exchanges was unknown."

"And yet," Lord Yeovil sighed, "there will always be wars."

THE END

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

Five-Thirty

Every Criminal Thinks He Can Conceal His Crime and Reap Its Profits. But Has One Ever Perfectly Covered His Tracks?

By Charles J. Naylor

WILLIAM WARD, late ranking duty sergeant of "D" Troop and now stable orderly, was sore. With his chin in his great hands, elbows on knees, toes turned in, he sat on his bunk and stared at the dusty blackness of the four-paned window, while the yellow light that struggled through the smoky chimney of an oil lamp tried to dispel the shadows in the two-bunk squad-room into which he had moved that afternoon.

He was motionless, except for a chewing movement of his thick lips, but the stillness of his big frame belied the ferment within him. Behind the black eyes under the disorderly thatching of heavy brows his mind turned and twisted upon itself in futile review of the circumstances that had led to his present position. The more he thought, the more sullen and hurt he became.

This was not the first time his nasty temper had got him into trouble. He had been busted before, and probably would be again, he thought, but losing his chevrons was the least of his troubles, for he knew the Old Man would make him again when enough time had passed and the Great God Discipline had been satisfied. It had been the sight of Swayne walking with Mary Devlin, just after she had told Ward that she couldn't get out that afternoon, that had been too much for a patience already about to break. And he had hit with his big fist the dumbest recruit he had ever seen—knocked him silly, so that he had had to be taken away on a litter.

It was a rotten thing to do, and Ward didn't blame the captain a bit for promptly putting him up before a court. That was all right—and the fine and reduction—but the very consideration of the captain, put down by Ward to his long service and generally good record, had gummed up the whole business and increased his punishment far beyond what was right.

The captain, of course, didn't know of the competition between the two sergeants for the favor of the Devlin girl; as a matter of fact even Swayne didn't know its seriousness, though probably Mary did, and when, to save the face of the ex-sergeant, at least in part, before the troop, Captain Locklan appointed Ward stable orderly, it was done innocently enough. Just the same, it put Ward directly under Swayne, and worse than that, even, they would have to share the same squad-room.

What made it still harder was that Swayne was such a decent hombre. But he could afford to be decent, because it was plain that Mary liked him while she barely tolerated Ward. Swayne was the stable sergeant, and had welcomed Ward to the stable gang with his usual frank grin. He knew, of course, that Ward had a liking for Mary, but he wasn't worried by the knowledge. Ward could see that only too well, and because his own honest craving for the red-cheeked, laughing daughter of the old post quartermaster sergeant was checked and thwarted, his love became a sour thing, dangerously like hate. So long as his contacts with Swayne had been infrequent the often threatening storms had had time to dissolve harmlessly. But now the situation was going to be different and very unpleasant. Ward foresaw that, especially as Mary Devlin had plainly gone out of her way lately to dodge him. His secret wounds were raw enough as it was, but to have them

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constantly opened and rubbed with the salt of jealousy, day and night—no, something was bound to break.

It had become harder and harder to have a word with her, and Swayne was the cause—that stuck out all over. This very evening Ward had gone to her father's quarters and had found the trim stable sergeant ahead of him. And for some time now if Swayne wasn't ahead of him then Mary wasn't to be seen at all.

AS HE sat there letting the canker in his soul have its way the notes of Call to Quarters drifted over from the parade ground and warned that Taps was near.

He began slowly to put away the articles of equipment that littered his bunk, thrown there in the afternoon when he had moved over from the barracks. He fastened the saber by its straps to the foot of the bunk and hung his web-belt with pistol holster and extra magazine holder attached over the bunk-iron, too. Methodically he verified the emptiness of the magazine in the pistol as well as the fact that the holder contained two full magazines. His spurs, buckled together, he hung next the belt. His rifle, clean and shining, the woodwork highly polished, the envy and admiration of all recruits and orderly buckers, its breech carefully wrapped in remnants of old socks, he stood in the corner.

He had his woolen shirt off and one legging unlaced when Sergeant Swayne stuck his head in the door.

"Say, sergeant, give me a hand with the wagon," he said. "It's misting outside, and the Old Man's on guard; he's sure to snoop around some tonight." The head with its carefully creased campaign hat was pulled back.

Ward looked suspiciously at the door left ajar, sullenly wondering if sarcasm was meant by the use of the lost title. He bent over the other legging. Very deliberately he disengaged the string from the hooks, his brows bunched in a frown. He folded the leggings with unusual neatness and placed them on the floor at the foot of the bunk.

The full length of Swayne now appeared at the door.

"Come out of it!" he said, and this time his voice carried the faintest hint of command. "I want to get the wagon in and I don't want to be all night about it."

Ward straightened up and looked into the unflickering, gray eyes of Swayne, but he said nothing. He followed the stable sergeant through the dimly lighted passageway out into the soft rain, and together they backed the heavy troop wagon into the stable, where it occupied a good part of the space up to where the stalls began.

At this end of the stable were saddle, feed, and store rooms besides that used by Swayne and Ward. At the other end was another squad-room where the saddler, farrier, and wagoner slept, and also another store room used jointly by the three as a shop and dispensary. In the middle of the stable, dividing each row of stalls, were saddle-rooms flanking the side doors, one of which was kept closed, affording a parking place for the light wagon. Across the road from the sergeant's end was the blacksmith shop where Hendricks, the horseshoer, slept.

As the two men finished and turned to go in, the sentry on that post rode by under the yellow light from the lamp-post outside.

"TROOP commander been round yet?" asked Swayne, as they entered the room.

"Ain't seen him," replied Ward.

"Well, he'll be here before morning, and you better be sure and be out at five-thirty sharp, or he'll be on your neck. Stock's got to be fed by reveille. They're the orders." He picked up the little clock and began winding it. "This's already set," he added.

"I know the orders 's well as you."

"Sure you do, serge—"

"Can the sergeant stuff," growled Ward, "an' don't try to be funny."

"I'm not trying to get funny—you needn't be so touchy. Forget it. I know you had hard luck, but we're going to get along fine. I'm glad you're here, because I've had a bellyful of these deadbeats the Old Man's been sending down here to be orderlies, just one after another. When they're no good in the troop he shoots 'em to me to find out if they're any use down here, and they're either drunk or asleep all the time—"

"Looky here; d'you mean—"

"Mean what?" interrupted Swayne sharply, as if not liking the other's tone.

"Are you meanin' to slam me, because I

got sent down here? D'you mean I'm like them others—"

Swayne smiled disarmingly. "No, you big boob. What's the matter with you, anyhow? I just know the kinda stuff you're made of, and with you and me on the job things'll go mighty easy and smooth. The stable police'll stand around with you on their tails, and I'll—"

"Yes," sneered Ward, "I know what you'll do, all right, all right; there ain't no secret about that."

SWAYNE looked at his companion in surprise. Stooping, he placed the clock on the floor by his bunk, then turned and lifted the lid of his foot-locker.

"Well, what'll I do?" he said, withdrawing his glance from the contents of the tray and fixing his eyes on Ward.

Ward's eyes shifted about the room, and he twisted his fingers around each other. In a dull way he felt ashamed, but there was something inside him that nagged for expression. He felt an undefinable injustice. He felt sorry for himself, and knew only that the cards were stacked against him, that the slender, fair-haired soldier opposite had the edge on him—and knew it.

Swayne's questioning eyes caught and held his, trying to get at the bottom of his queer behavior.

"Well, what'll I do?" repeated the sergeant. "Let's have it."

"You'll be out chasin' after that Devlin girl while I'm keepin' your damn stable in order. That's what you'll be doin'," burst from Ward against his common sense, and, in so escaping, the foolish words lit up all his smoldering jealousy, intensified a hundred times by the thought that he had given away his secret hurt and made a fool of himself.

"Oho!" Swayne chuckled. "So that's what's biting you?" He laughed comfortably and looked at Ward with curiosity. "I never knew you felt that way about Mary," he went on, "at least not like that—not that much." He glanced toward the open locker again, and Ward, following the direction of his eyes, saw a cabinet photograph of the girl set in a gaudy frame in the middle compartment of the tray. "Well," he continued, "you better forget it."

Taps began sounding over on the parade, and the sweet tones were muffled, their sadness increased by their passage through the fine rain.

"Why?" said Ward, his voice hoarse, rising.

"Say, blow out the light; will you?" said Swayne carelessly.

"Hell with the light! Why?" repeated Ward. He was breathing heavily, and his mind was confused. The faint hope that he had had of getting the girl himself was slipping from him.

Swayne kicked off his shoes and rose also.

"She's my girl," he said coolly, unbuckling his belt; and as he moved over to the lamp he added, "We're going to marry."

Blood rushed to Ward's head, and he looked blindly around, his hands clenching and unclenching. Through the fog in his brain his staring eyes caught sight of the rifle in the corner by the locker. He reached over and seized it by the barrel, and with both hands raised high above him he brought the steel-shod butt full upon the head of Swayne at the moment when, his hands busy at his belt, the sergeant was leaning over to blow out the light.

The light went out as the butt landed.

Ward came to himself by degrees. His hands gripped the rifle barrel, and he was hunched forward as though he had just driven a stake. He was afraid, and he felt sick. The butt of the gun rested, it seemed, on the table. Ward remembered hearing the jingle of the lamp chimney. He ran his tongue over his lips, but without relief.

"Swayne?" he whispered.

Taps began to sound again, this time as though from far off. The bugler was facing away from the stables.

"Swayne?" he said again, urgently.

His hands felt weak, not strong enough to pick a flower, he thought; and he wondered why that should occur to him. Funny thing to think of! His legs trembled, and heavy sweat started on top of his head and trickled down his forehead and behind his ears.

The last note of Taps lingered and died away. There was no sound in the world until a horse down the stable kicked the side of his stall. It crashed like a pistol shot.

Ward tried to focus his thoughts. It was not so dark in the room now. The glimmer of light from the street lamp across the road made itself apparent through the window.

Ward could distinguish the outlines of the table and the other bed, and of a darker shadow on the floor—a shadow with substance. His knees failed him and he sank into a sitting position on his own bed. The rifle, released, fell to the floor. He dropped his face in his hands and tried to think, but he could only listen, tensely, for some movement from the floor. He strained to catch the sound of breathing, but there was no sound, except an occasional restless movement in the stalls outside.

Maybe Swayne wasn't dead—only stunned. He must find out. But he couldn't stir from the bed—his legs refused to lift him. If he had a light now—but he couldn't do that. The sentry would be sure to want to know about it—and the captain might come. A fresh wave of fear ran over him, and he bit his lip until he felt warm blood. He must get away from this place—get away from that, on the floor.

Then the thought came to him that whatever was—was, and his courage commenced to flow back. He had to look out for himself. With hands that shook he reached for his leggings. It wouldn't be any trick at all, he thought, to get away. Better go right now and get out of this—away from that shadow on the floor. He shuddered violently. The legging laces wouldn't catch in the hooks; his fingers seemed enormous and were numb.

When at last he got up and moved toward the door, he hugged the bed and the wall-locker and kept close to the other wall, as far away from the dark splotch on the floor as possible. He opened the door just wide enough to slide through and in the dim light from the stable lamp edged his way past the wagon. Standing in shadow at one side of the entrance, he looked out. The rain was still falling, sifting down.

OUTSIDE it was as still as within. Ward listened for hoof-beats that would tell of the approach of the mounted sentry, but there was no sign of him. The captain, Ward thought, maybe would not be around for some time yet. He probably had taken the reports at Taps and gone to his quarters for a little sleep, or he might even now be prowling about. You never could tell when that old hawk would appear out of nowhere. Still it was as good a time as any to make a getaway. He'd chance it.

Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924

He turned back for his coat and hat, feeling in his breeches pocket for the few dollars he had left from pay-day.

At the door of the room he wished he hadn't left until he was ready to stay out. He didn't want to go back in. He hated to go back in. He felt that he couldn't. He stood irresolute with his hand on the knob, and another thought came to him, born of the feel of paper money in his pocket. He would have to lose the money he had on deposit with the paymaster—over four hundred dollars—and with that his mind returned to Mary Devlin for the first time since the killing. The entries in his deposit book and his dreams of Mary had kept step, one with the other, and now all had gone to smash.

Still holding the door-knob in his clammier hand he rested his hot head against the jamb of the door. The cool wood felt grateful. The aching of the nerves in his tense body was subsiding somewhat when he heard the *plop-plop* of hoofs in mud, and he slid quickly into the room. He stood still while the sentry passed, and then felt his way by the walls to the bed and sat down.

Was it necessary to lose everything, he wondered. He was liable to be caught if he deserted—practically certain to be, after this. He had been in worse jams in the Philippines, cases where his life hadn't been worth a nickel. And he had got away with it—more than once. Maybe there was some way out of this? Mary Devlin! He sucked in his breath sharply. How she would despise a deserter! If Swayne was the deserter, now, instead of him? Why not? If Swayne disappeared it would seem no queerer than his own desertion would have been before this thing happened, and the regiment had known the most unlikely desertions, often without apparent cause, and the more mysterious they were the more damnable were the stories.

He pondered over this, and suddenly was aware of a noise that had been going on without interruption since the light went out. He heard the ticking of the clock, somewhere over by Swayne's bed. It was a muffled ticking, as though the unsentient thing knew what had happened, and was marking the time in hushed accents. Strangely, it gave him a sort of half-courage. At least it had a semblance of life.

The clock also reminded him that time

was passing. He must decide something quickly. Many things could happen—the captain, for instance, he was always dangerous. He wouldn't come in the squad-room unless he found something wrong, but he was mighty finicky. That he had to be officer of the day this night of all nights was a calamity. Then there was the sentry—a dozen incidents liable to happen would bring him nosing around, an unusual noise, a stray horse or mule, anything suspicious. Ward wasn't worrying, though, about the stable gang; he knew that bunch; they were sleeping like dead men—he shivered. Still there was danger there, too; maybe they hadn't all got in yet. That wagoner, now, he was a chronic drunk, and might come rolling in at any time. Well, he could handle the wagoner.

THE effort to outline his position had a calming effect on Ward, and the more he thought about it the more he became convinced of the improbability of his being able to get away.

Suddenly it occurred to him that he hadn't examined Swayne yet; maybe he wasn't dead after all. It might have been a glancing blow, and Swayne might only be unconscious. Maybe a fractured skull, or concussion of the brain—a man could be unconscious for a week that way.

Here was a possible way out of the blind alley he was in. Leavenworth and a bob-tail were better than hanging. He made two false starts before he was able to approach Swayne, then he put out his hand and touched the still figure. Swayne was lying on his face, his right arm under him and the other extending in the direction of his length. The left knee was drawn up.

Ward felt faint and sick again, but he nerved himself and placed his hand on Swayne's side. There was no movement, and he forced his hand under the left breast and put his ear to the back. Clearly he was dead. Ward touched the hand—already it was cold. He jerked back, sweat breaking out all over his body. He groped his way to the door to get into the air, found and opened it, plunged out and ran into the wagon, which creaked and groaned from his impact, startling the nearer horses, some of which scrambled to their feet snorting. There was a mild commotion and the sweat on Ward turned cold. He leaned against the wagon weakly, expecting any instant to hear a hail from the other end of the stable, or from the sentry outside.

Nothing happened, but the collision with the wagon had released a trigger in Ward's head. His brain no longer dragged; it worked easily and quickly.

Here was his way of escape! With the wagon he could take the body where he wished.

His movements now were deliberate but with the efficiency that spells progress. His scheme was simple, and held the minimum of risk. Also it might allow him to remain in the troop; he smiled grimly at that. But there was no room for squeamishness. He had handled dead men before—plenty of them. He had to get the body out of the room and out of sight without any more delay. If the captain would only hold off for half an hour!

Ward slipped into the feed room where he knew there was a pile of condemned blankets ready to be cut up for grooming cloths. He took off the top one and went back. With only such hesitation as the darkness demanded he threw the blanket over the head and shoulders of the dead man to prevent the possibility of blood getting on himself. Then, lifting the body under the arm-pits, he backed slowly out of the room, the dead heels dragging on the floor. The extra length of the blanket fell forward over the face and torso.

At the rear of the wagon Ward stooped and caught the corpse under the knees. Swayne had been tall but slim, and his weight didn't bother Ward. He lifted the body easily enough into the wagon, and then climbed over the wheel, hauling the body forward and laying it as nearly crosswise as possible under the seat. Dropping from the end of the wagon, he wiped his forehead with his sleeve and went into the room. He felt around for Swayne's shoes and leggings, but he couldn't find them, and after listening for a long minute he struck a match, shading it from the windows with his hat. A quick glance around located them and also Swayne's coat on the chair at the foot of the bunk. His hat was on the floor where it had fallen when he had lifted the lid of the locker.

Ward gathered up these effects and put them under the wagon seat. He had a thought and, rummaging in Swayne's locker, dug out a suit of civilian clothes—he could

tell it by the feel—and took it out to the wagon. He went back and removed Swayne's pistol from its holster and put that in, too. Then he gathered from some of the nearest stalls armfuls of bedding which he threw in at the rear of the wagon, arranging the straw so as to cover naturally the heap under the blanket. His heart was pounding as he neared the finish of this part of the job, and when it was completed without the appearance of the captain he found that he was weak and limp from the strain. As he climbed down over the front wheel his knees were shaking violently, and he leaned against the wall, breathing hard.

Plop-plop-plop-plop!

Ward shrank back against the wall and tried not to move.

THE sentry looked in as he passed the entrance and evidently saw something unusual, an unfamiliar shadow, perhaps, for he reined in and rode up to the doorway, and leaned forward over the horse's shoulder. His poncho was wet and glistening, and Ward noted shining drops of water on the brim of his campaign hat.

After a moment the sentry said:

"H'lo, bo! What you doin'?"

"Nothin'," replied Ward, controlling his voice with an effort. "Can't sleep. Of'cer the Day been round?"

"Nope. I just come on."

"What time d'you go on?"

" 'Bout three-thirty. You must 'a' eat somethin'. 'F I was you I'd turn in. You'll never go to sleep standin' up."

He backed out and rode slowly on.

Ward thought the advice good, but there was one more thing to be done. He reentered the room and struck another match, using the same precautions as before. Then he knelt down and examined the floor for blood stains. There was one place that had been a small pool, but which had been mopped up by the dragging of the body, and it was now a short streak. This he covered by pulling the foot rug over it for the time being. He picked up the rifle from where it had fallen and went to the door, which he opened a crack, and crouching there wiped off the darker stains on the butt as well as he could with the rags from around the breech, carefully replacing them, stained side in. He stood the rifle in the wall-locker to be attended to later.

"Now," he muttered, "let the old buzzard come! I'm ready for him."

Slipping off his breeches, he got into bed and pulled the blanket up to his chin. He lay on his back staring up at the dark, going over in his mind all that was yet to be done. It was a tremendous relief to get *that* out of the room. He wasn't clear yet by a wide margin, but with any sort of luck he'd make it, sure. He was far from sleep, and he heard the sentry ride by more than once. He didn't care whether he slept or not—there was the alarm, if he did—but his eyes were dry and hot, and his mind was crowded.

"God!" he thought. "There's a lot of chances to fall down!"

He listened for the captain, and once the picture of Mary Devlin rose before him; but beside her came the profile of Sergeant Swayne about to blow out the light. Other pictures came—he had once been on duty at Fort Leavenworth, and he knew the penitentiary—and he tossed about.

Gradually the quality of the darkness changed. The features of the room took shape until they stood out in the gray light, plain and ordinary and matter-of-fact.

It occurred to Ward that the sooner he got the animals fed the sooner he could load the wagon, and be on the way to the dump. It would be necessary only to keep the stable police off the wagon after they arrived, and he would have the loading well begun by that time. Then he would have to wait until the other troop wagons had started back from the dump—there were only three and the one from the Q.M. stables—and he could break down on the way out until all four had passed him returning. After that he would be alone at the dump and could bury the body. Anyhow, it was the only chance he had.

Breakfast was not for him; he could get something to eat at the post exchange later, but right now food didn't interest him. Besides, he had to catch the wagoner before he started for the troop, so he could be sent off with the light wagon to meet the early train on some fake errand.

Ward stared about the room. It looked about as usual, and he got the rifle from the locker to examine it in the light. He gulped when he found a few light hairs sticking to the heel. He picked them off, his face turning gray, and dropped them into the spittoon. The rifle he replaced in the locker

* *Everybody's Magazine, May, 1924*

and, putting on his breeches and shoes, went out to the wagon. Except for the fact that there was anything in the wagon at all, the look of the contents was innocent enough.

AS WARD stepped down from the hub of the front wheel staccato footfalls sounded on the concrete at the other end of the stable. Ward's stomach seemed to contract into a small knot, and his legs wabbled under him for an instant. Sweat started again in the roots of his hair, and he leaned against the wheel.

Captain Locklan came briskly down between the stalls, glancing to the right and left, stopping here and there for closer observation.

"Well, Ward," he said crisply, "you're on the job early."

"Yes, sir." The stable orderly stood at attention and saluted. He forced himself to meet the boring look from the gray eyes that he had never been afraid of until now.

"That's good. I'll be glad when I have a corporal's vacancy. When you do blow up, Ward, you don't waste any time coming round again. But you'll have to quit this sort of stuff; it won't go."

"Yes, sir."

"Everything all right?"

"Yes, sir—that is—there's somethin' I want to speak to the troop commander about."

"Well?"

"It's—it's about Sergeant Swayne, sir. That's the reason I'm ahead o' time. He ain't here, sir."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know, sir; he ain't been here all night, sir."

"That's queer. I don't remember that he had a pass. Did he say anything to you about not getting back?"

"N-no, sir."

"Doesn't sound like Swayne; I wonder if he's had an accident."

They were standing at the front of the wagon, and Ward, suddenly feeling the need to rest, shifted his weight to one leg and laid his hand on the wheel. He had the sickening thought that his eyes were not acting right.

"I don't know, sir; I looked at his stuff. His pistol's gone, an' a suit of civvies he had in his locker—"

"Rot!"

"Will the troop commander look for himself—"

The captain started for the door.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling . . .

"What the devil's that?" cried Captain Locklan, startled at the insistent sound almost at his ear.

Ward, in a state of collapse, hung on the wheel and stared at the captain with haggard, pleading eyes. His lips moved jerkily, and his face felt empty and shrunken as though all the blood had been drawn off to reënforce the pumping of his heart.

The captain's thin lips came together in a straight line, and his close-clipped gray mustache bristled with excitement. He took a step toward the stable orderly.

"What—" he began.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling . . .

The captain stepped on the hub of the wheel and looked into the wagon. The clock again repeated its muffled call; it was under the straw. Ward had slumped back against the wall, his knees sagging.

The troop commander climbed into the wagon and thrust his arms into the pile. At what he felt his face turned white.

"Hendricks!" he shouted, in his penetrating drill-ground voice. "Hendricks!"

"Get into your quarters—you!" he ordered between his teeth.

Ward shambled into his room and closed the door.

The horseshoer appeared in his underclothes, frowsy-headed and blinking; at sight of the troop commander he ran across the road. At a gesture he scrambled up over the seat, and together they cleared away the muck and threw back the blanket.

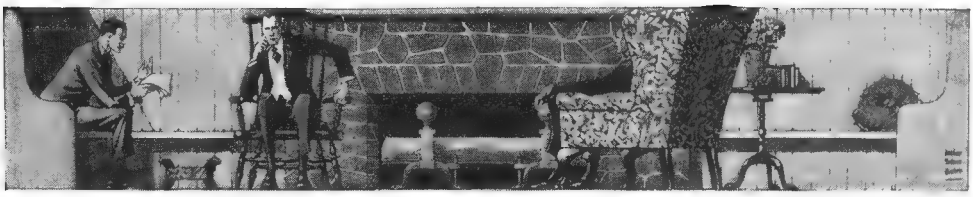
STAMMERING guttural oaths, they stared at the dead Swayne and at the alarm clock hooked by its ring to the belt-buckle tongue which had slipped back into one of its familiar holes.

"Call up the guard-house!" ordered the captain.

As Hendricks opened the door through which Ward had disappeared there came from it the smothered report of a pistol followed by a heavy thud.

The horseshoer stared, holding on to the door-jamb.

"I better call up the hospital instead," he gasped over his shoulder, and stumbled toward the roadway.



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

IN INTRODUCING herself to the *Chimney Corner* circle, Nelia Gardner White ("At the Sign of the Ash," page 115) says a word in defense of Main Street:

I've been trying to concoct an adventurous past to reveal to Chimney Corner, but even my supposedly fertile imagination has rebelled at the attempt. Neither did I come from a long, illustrious line of writers, nor have I poked about in the dark corners of Patagonia, the South Sea Islands, or Andalusia acquiring adventures that have to come out in print. My father is a small-town minister and my life has been spent in the Main Street atmosphere of little towns. Thanks to my parents and a handed-down ability for contentment, that atmosphere has always been to me one, not of the sordidness that this generation of writers loves to portray, but of satisfying beauty. Not that there isn't sordidness there, but that isn't all there is, and it seems to me far more essential that we emphasize the peace and beauty that we know are there, too. Four years ago, almost by accident, I began writing. My second story I sold—for fifteen dollars. Since then I have sold nearly fifty. Though there is to me a very real glory and satisfaction in the writing of stories, I must confess that I get lots more fun out of seeing my boy's eyes widen in appreciative wonder as I tell of the 'Satiable Elephant's Child or Epaminondas!

PATTERN-MAKER in an iron foundry, naval cadet, draughtsman, then army officer sums up the interesting career of Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Naylor, retired, whose story "Five-Thirty" appears on page 172.

I am one of those unfortunates who "always wanted to write" [he says] but didn't, and it was not until Uncle Sam gently persuaded me to "proceed to my home" because of disability incident to the service that I really began to write. My first job was that of pattern-maker in an iron foundry, and it is interesting to me that I have

Stanley Olmsted, whose "The Fifteenth Corinthians" leads this issue, has a variety of work to his credit of which he may justly be proud. In one story he pictures the humble folk of his native mountains, forces the reader to share their tragedies, their joys, and in the next with equal facility he paints for you a prima donna or a temperamental stage star. In all there is a faithfulness to reality and a style that reminds one of beautiful music.

come back to patterns, my chief concern being that they shall not be wooden like the old ones. My office hours were from six to six, and I gratefully resigned when I was appointed to Annapolis. My naval career, however, was interrupted because of temperamental incompatibility with Applied Mathematics, and I resigned from there, too, by request. Back to the foundry, but I had learned to draw and I was promoted to draughtsman. Here occurred my first difficulty with plot. The casting of a cog-wheel turned up with one more tooth than the plot-outline called for, and, after earnest discussion with the boss, I, sighing for the open places, found one.

I CONVINCED the editor of the Philadelphia *Press* that he could not lose much, at six dollars a week, by giving me a trial, and I became a habitué of funerals, receiving wards, and police stations; also I went to church three times every Sunday, and for a time ran the society news. About the time I was raised to eight dollars I had another chance at glory, and I entered West Point, where this time I received the decision after four grueling rounds over my former adversary Battling Mathematics. I was graduated in 1901 and chose the cavalry. I have served in the Philippines, on the Mexican border, in Hawaii, and east, west, north and south in the United States. During the war I served in the infantry of the Ninety-first Division until I was retired, after which I served in staff departments. I didn't get overseas. The joke about proceeding to my home is still on me, because with the whole planet to choose from my severest critic and best pal and I are unable to decide where to live in a world where everywhere is desirable.

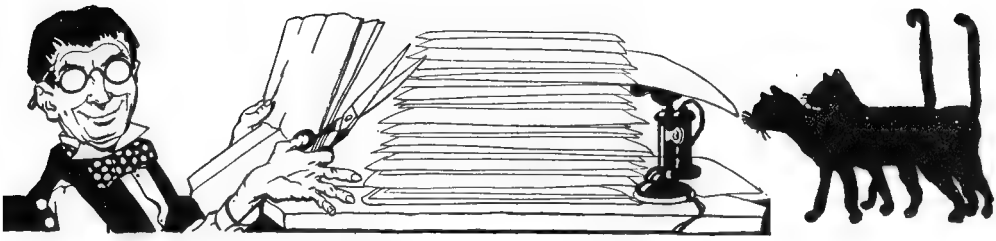
Edwina Levin MacDonald, author of "The Uncertain Quantity" (page 131).

MARY HENKE ("A Day's Work," page 110) was a newspaper reporter before she began writing fiction.

Before I began writing fiction [she says] I used to be a reporter "covering" courts in an Ohio River city. A good thrilling murder story was then the height of my aspirations. Later when I was dodging over Europe getting stories for a news syndicate, I wasn't happy unless I was attending a revolution or a riot of the unemployed. But all the time I was becoming more and more conscious that there was as much human interest in a policeman on the corner as there was in a Bolshevik or a criminal, and that there was more simple human drama in a mid-western village than there was in London. So I finally came back to the village—and discovered that it had established a country club and that the fire chief and the leading grocer had learned to wear golf knickers without embarrassment. George Ade, who is a near neighbor when he is at home, was responsible for disturbing the isolation of the middle West in this manner.

"THE Odyssey of Oliver Jones" (page 59), by Dale Collins, like most stories worth writing, has a foundation in fact. The author says:

It was suggested by a meeting with a white who had married into the East very much in the manner described. The difference between the story and the actuality lay in the fact that the living man was of the Western world and his desertion of it set his feet on a path which led downward to degradation. He had overlooked the one vital factor. Travel, as the mighty Trevor Jones understood, is one of life's richest experiences. I, too, have an odyssey, and it includes the brightest pages in my story. It was made in a sixty-four-ton motor-boat beneath the Stars and Stripes and the manner of it is told in "Sea Tracks of the *Speejacks*." Maybe you have heard of the *Speejacks*. She took in Australia in the course of her world trip, and one day I stood in my editor's room with a telegram in my hand and beheld, even as Oliver Jones, the walls of humdrum life crumbling before my eyes. The wire was an invitation to join the yacht, and write the story. I went into that little ninety-eight-foot world a stranger, and within two days had been made to feel as much at home as if I had been born in it. The American capacity for friendship is amazing. You certainly hold the world's title in this most desirable feature of existence. Australians esteem you for it. Those were wonderful days and nights in which we cruised along the seas that lap the Line to all the places the very names of which are romance. It was a joy to chronicle them in the "Sea Tracks": it will be a joy to remember them when I am old.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

On Charles City, Iowa, grocery: "*Fresh home-made cookies*—15c
Fresh milk and cream
Fresh paint." (MISS M. E. S.)
Grocers in Toledo: "*Young & Single.*"
Supt. of a bond and mortgage company: "*Rich Penny.*"
In St. Joseph, Mich.: "*Edward Weed, Cigar Manufacturer.*"
In Follansbee, W. Va.: "*Dr. S. S. Dodril, Dentist.*" (MRS. M. S.)
Sign in the "Hub," Steubenville, Ohio: "*Expansion Sale. Garter Gum, $1.00 a Yard.*" (MRS. M. S.)
In Ontario, Calif.: "*Worker & Worker, Garage Props.*" (E. E. B.)
In Calexico, Calif.: "*Thing & Thing.*" (E. E. B.)

(*Ad in Sterling City, Texas, Times*)

"We would like to see every girl in Sterling with our Common Sense Corsets on. Sterling Mercantile Company." (J. E.)

W-w-what a wet spring we've been having!

(*Newton, Mass., Progress*)

FOR SALE—Harper Orophone for deafness, for sale. Used short period by elderly lady who died shortly after purchase. Very effective. (A. H., JR.)

***I'll* say it was.**

(*San Diego Union*)

FOR RENT—Completely and elegantly furnished for tahrdlapuopuopuopupop furnished. For particulars call Hillcrest 871-W. (MRS. C. M. E.)

Some dog house!

(*Tampa Tribune*)

C. R. Ryan, popular knight of the grip from Jacksonville, is a gust of the Hillsboro while in the city on a business sojourn. (MRS. A. J. B.)

Just blew in, so to speak.

(*Ad of N. Y. undertaker*)

"Beautiful musical services supplied by phonagraph records of hymns sung by celebrated artists, quartettes, duets, solos and the like. The favorite hymns of the deceased will be rendered with appropriate orchestral accompaniment by great artists."

O grave, where is thy gramophone! O death, where is thy victoriola!

(*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

Man Seeks Divorce Because Wife Would Not Make Coffee for Breakfast. (W. S. C.)

Insufficient grounds.

(*Midland, Mont., Empire Fair Premium List*)

The "Stockman," W. H. Conway, Prop., will give a $5.00 box of cigars to the Grand Champion Duroc Jersey Sow. (E. C. H.)

Will this smoking craze among females ever stop?

(*Richmondville, N. Y., Phoenix*)

A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Ray Becker, a few days ago. The mother is she that was Marion Hayes of this village.

Eugene Smith and wife, of Sharon Springs, expect to start for Florida in a few days. Mrs. Smith will be remembered as she that was Effie Groat before her marriage.

A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. William Gittings a few days ago. Mrs. Gittings will be remembered here as she that was Miss Rachael Ryder. (C. I. J.)

The chorus will now sing that old familiar strain, "She ain't what she used to was."

(*Eastford Items*)

The fellows who represented the fire extinguisher and demonstrated same some time ago, sold several here. We don't bite at all. Fakirs never did put any thing over on us. Wait until a fire starts and then folks will know what kind of an extinguisher it is. Too late then.

The Sage; he speaketh!

Copyright, 1924, by Gridley Adams.

(Sign in Marietta, Ohio)

C. Vic Dye
Up-stairs. (E. J. C.)

I won't do it; make him come down here.

(Charlottesville, Va., Progress)

WANTED—Permanently young married man. Experienced in garden and orchard work preferred. Reference required. Phone 33-W-2. (MRS. L. B.)

Boy, call that number on the phone quick, and see if a grass-widower could qualify.

(On menu of Sheldun-Munn Hotel, Ames)

Cream of Foul Soup.

Yes, I had some of that once.

(Glimpsed from the 20th Century Limited while splitting through Syracuse)

"The Turf Cafeteria"

Where food is probably dirt-cheap (if you don't mind the brown taste it leaves).

(Lamped from the "L" in Chicago)

"Wagtayles Waffle Shop"

Where, I am told, you can get a dog-goned good meal.

(Sign in Chicago)

"Kumbach—the Tailor"

Never again, after the last one he made for *me!*

(Ad of New York Central Railroad)

"Travel to Chicago by the Water Level Route"

Yes, I felt the bump when we went over Niagara Falls.

(A writer on Motoring)

"The motorists in this country run into millions."

And last week one of them nearly got me.

(Boober, Texas, Items)

Lois Devore spent Thursday night with Mildred Mitchell the past week.

That's the town I spent two weeks in one Sunday afternoon.

(Rhinebeck Gazette)

A guy in New Jersey thinks that T. N. T. is a railroad.

He'd change his mind if he ever took a ride on it.

(Caldwell, Ohio, Press)

"Will Exhume Body of Pearl Ginn."

That's all right if they'll let Gordon stay down.

(In a letter received from Chicago)

"I believe he doctors all the Swedish people on the north side." (MISS M. L. D.)

He wouldn't do me any good; my trouble's mostly on my south porch.

(Stanford Heights Items)

Clarence Knapp, who has been at the hospital for eye treatment for several weeks, returned to his home at Willows. The physicians there say the outlook is not very encouraging.

Almost a closed incident.

(Morgansville, Ky., Items)

Warmest felicitations are extended to Mr. J. Harry Hitch, of Covington, on his recent marriage. We trust he has found one who will add to his happiness, subtract from his sorrows, divide his labors and multiply his blessings.

I wonder if he married that Post girl?

(Rhinebeck Gazette)

"Come For Wedding Find Prison Bars."

What's new about that?

(Streator, Ill., Independent Times)

Lloyd Hess entertained several lady friends Thursday evening while their husbands attended the Masonic Lodge. (C. E. H.)

Boy, tear up that application I just gave you to mail.

(Columbus Citizen)

Mrs. Roy Williams, 1300 Hildreth-av, awakened by a noise in her room early Sunday morning endeavored to seize the intruder. She told police that in the darkness her hands encountered a bald head with bare feet, but he escaped. (H. E. L.)

Hairbreadth escape, obviously.

(Directions given motorist at Tess Corners, Wis.)

"Go ahead on this road, and then left until you can't go no more."

(And in Penn.)

"Take the road to the right about a mile this side of the white church."

(And to me in a Hartford office building)

"His office is the third door this side of the last."

Which is *that!*

(Falmouth, Ky., Outlook)

When the word flashed with lightning-like speed over the wires last Friday night that Mrs. Bessie, the beloved wife of James Riddell, of near Robinson, had suddenly passed away, had died, heart stopped functioning, we could hardly believe the report.

The exacting reporter.

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

"YOU'RE rather a young man to be left in charge of a drug shop," said the fussy old gentleman. "Have you any diploma?"

"Why—er—no, sir," replied the shopman, "but we have a preparation of our own that's just as good."

AN IRISH maid came to her mistress and said: "Faith, ma'am, 'tis sorry I am but I'll be troublin' ye for me wages. I'm l'avin' the day."

The mistress pressed her for a reason.

" 'Tis scared of the master I am, he's that quare in his head."

"Why, Mary, what on earth do you mean?"

"Well, ma'am, 'twas yisterday that I found him on his knees. He was peerin' here and peerin' there, and I says to him, 'Kin I hilp ye, sor?' An' thin he says to me, he says: 'Yis, I'm lookin' fur the Red Dragon an' the East Wind. Kin ye see thim anywhere?' An' so, ma'am, ye'll plaze be givin' me my wages, for I'm scared to stay."

FRECKLE-FACED Mickey plays in Hal Roach's "Our Gang" comedies. His mother says he never steps out of the character he portrays on the screen. The other evening she asked him to pour her a cup of tea. Mickey hied himself to the kitchen and returned in due time with the tea.

"It's full of specks, Mickey," remarked his mother, sipping the steaming liquid. "Was the strainer clean?"

"Couldn't find it, Ma," was the rejoinder, "so I just put it through the fly swatter."

"HOW long have you been married?" asked the clerk at the hotel desk as an elderly bridegroom registered.

"Two weeks," replied the happy man.

"Front!" cried the clerk. "Show the gentleman to Parlor B. Fifteen dollars a day, sir."

"Third wife," calmly said the guest.

"Oh, excuse me! Front, show the gentleman to 824 back. Take the elevator; four dollars a week, sir."

"DID you present your account to the defendant?" inquired a lawyer of a client.

"I did, your Honor."

"And what did he say?"

"He told me to go to the devil."

"And what did you do then?"

"Why, then I came to you."

IT IS told of Charles Lamb that one afternoon, after he had taken his seat in a crowded omnibus, a stout gentleman looked in and politely asked, "All full inside?"

"I don't know how it may be with the other passengers," answered Lamb, "but that last piece of oyster pie did the business for *me!*"

"LET me kiss those tears away, sweetheart," he begged tenderly.

She fell into his arms and he was very busy for a few minutes. But the tears flowed on.

"Can nothing stop them?" he asked breathlessly.

"No," she murmured, "it's hay fever; but go on with the treatment."

MARGARET was maid of all work in the Bradley family, the members of which are given to quarreling. One morning Margaret sought her mistress and tendered her resignation. Mrs. Bradley was distressed and loath to part with so excellent a servant.

"And are you really going to leave us, Margaret?" she asked sadly. "What is the matter? Haven't we always treated you as one of the family?"

"Yis, mum," replied the girl, "an' Oi've shtood it as long as Oi'm goin' to, mum."

CHINAMEN are not usually very courageous in the wild woods. The following, though, seems to show the ready wit of the race.

An old Chinaman, delivering laundry in a mining camp, heard a noise and espied a huge brown bear sniffing his tracks in the newly fallen snow.

"Huh!" he gasped. "You likee my tlacks, I makee some more."

MR. MULLIGAN was lying upon his death bed. Mrs. Mulligan was seated at his side, giving what small consolation she could offer in the circumstances.

"Sure, and Mike," said she, "is there innything I cud do fer yez before yuh lave us?"

"Margaret, me darlint," said he, "I think I smell the odor of roastin' pork. I belave I cud eat a bit of it."

"I'm sorry, Mike," said she, "but I can't cut into that pork roast; we're savin' it fer the wake."

ARMED with an English walnut, the Sunday-school teacher explained to her class the mystery of the separation of soul and body at death. After the soul (the kernel) was liberated, she proceeded to inter the body (the shell) in a flower pot. The children nodded their heads and looked intelligent.

The following day one of the wee tots ran to her mother holding up a bleeding finger and weeping pitifully. "Oh, mama! Mama!" she wailed. "We'll have to bury me. My shell's cracked and my soul is all running out!"

"BETTY'S face is her fortune."

"Well, at any rate, I see it draws a lot of interest."

ON HIS tour of the district an inspector of city high schools came before a class of girls. He wrote upon the blackboard, "LXXX." Then, peering over the rims of his spectacles at a good-looking girl in the first row, he asked:

"Young lady, I'd like to have you tell me what that means."

"Love and kisses," the girl replied.

"I HEAR you've had a fight with the Brown boy. Didn't I tell you I'd punish you if you fought again?" asked the father sternly.

The son looked up nonchalantly. "Dad, you'd better take a look at what I did to that Brown kid before you start anything," warned the youthful warrior.

THE bus was making its early-morning trip to connect with the train on a branch line in Mississippi. It was filled with half-awake passengers, with the exception of one very talkative traveling salesman. Failing to start the usual conversation, he turned to the negro driver.

"Sambo," he said, "why in thunder did they put this station so far from the town?"

"Don't know, boss," said the sleepy negro, "'cep'in' it is dey wants it on de railroad."

MOTHER: What was the cause of the disturbance in the sitting-room last night after we left you and Charles to yourselves?

DAUGHTER (blushing, furiously): He stole a kiss, mother.

MOTHER: He did? Did you not rebuke him?

DAUGHTER: Yes. I—I—I sat on him.

A SMALL boy handed in the following in an examination paper in United States history:

"General Braddock was killed in the Revolutionary War. He had three horses shot under him and a fourth went through his clothes."

AN OLD Southern planter was discussing the hereafter with his body-servant.

"The first one that goes, Sam, must come back and tell the other what it is like over there."

"Yes, Massa. Dat suits me exac'ly, Massa; but if you go fust, would you please come back in the daytime?"

Homes or "Homes"?

HAVE you ever visited an Old Folks' Home? What a heart-breaking thing it is to see the pitiful attempts of these poor old people to give the few square feet of space they can call their own a touch of the real home they once knew. Not much can be done with only a cot, a bureau and a chair. Yet those who feel the home-hunger try pathetically to make the place seem like home by tacking up a few pictures torn from magazines and by keeping photographs on their bureaus.

And they call such places "homes"! The places where the poor, the sick, the deaf, the blind, the orphans and other public charges are housed. Shelters only—compared with real *homes* such as most of them formerly had.

More real homes and fewer "homes" are what this country needs right now. The welfare of the individual, the family, the nation, the whole world is based upon homes. Civilization itself is founded upon the home. Have you a *real* home or just a roof and four walls?

If you have a home—protect it. Make it permanent and *homelike*. Guard against the necessity of ever seeking shelter in a "home". Look at your home. Think about it. What can you do to make it better? Home surroundings exert such a tremendous influence over family life.

Better homes mean better children. Better children mean better men and women. Better men and women mean better citizens. And better citizens mean a better America.

All over the country the movement for better homes is spreading. Corporations and civic bodies have given their aid; magazines and newspapers have given space to this great national movement which works toward better citizenship.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company is heartily in sympathy with these plans to relieve the housing shortage, and to provide happier living conditions. Since June 1920 it has made 24,508 loans on dwellings and apartments, aggregating $171,663,100, that provided accommodations for 49,850 families.

But outside of the Cities? In the same period—since June 1920—the Company made 16,383 loans on farms in twenty-two agricultural States.

To provide against the danger of loss of home by mortgage foreclosure, in case of death or disability of the home owner, the Metropolitan has devised a special form of home protection known as a Mortgage Redemption Policy.

Information regarding it will be furnished by mail on request.

HALEY FISKE, *President*.

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Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. *Health is yours once more.*

"When all the other girls were wearing their first low-necked dresses, I was staying at home—all on account of a breaking-out on my back that I simply couldn't get rid of. Dad is a druggist so I tried all the medicated soaps and creams that he had in stock, but finally gave up. It was awful. One day my chum told me about Fleischmann's Yeast and urged me to take it. I took half a cake dissolved in water before every meal—it is not only easy to take but delightful—and in two weeks every trace of the eruption had disappeared. It worked like magic, really, and made me feel like a different person."

(*A letter from Miss Esther Shaw of Sanford, Calif.*)

"At the age of forty, when I had most at stake, I found myself slipping in health. I was troubled with indigestion, constipation and nervous debility. I had read about people taking Fleischmann's Yeast, and ordered some.

"A while later, in answer to a friend's inquiry, I was surprised to hear myself reply, 'I feel like a prize-fighter' and realized then that I had not felt any sign of indigestion for some time, and was putting in ten to twelve hours' hard brain work daily. I knew I was back again."

(*A letter from Mr. W. L. King of Washington, D. C.*)

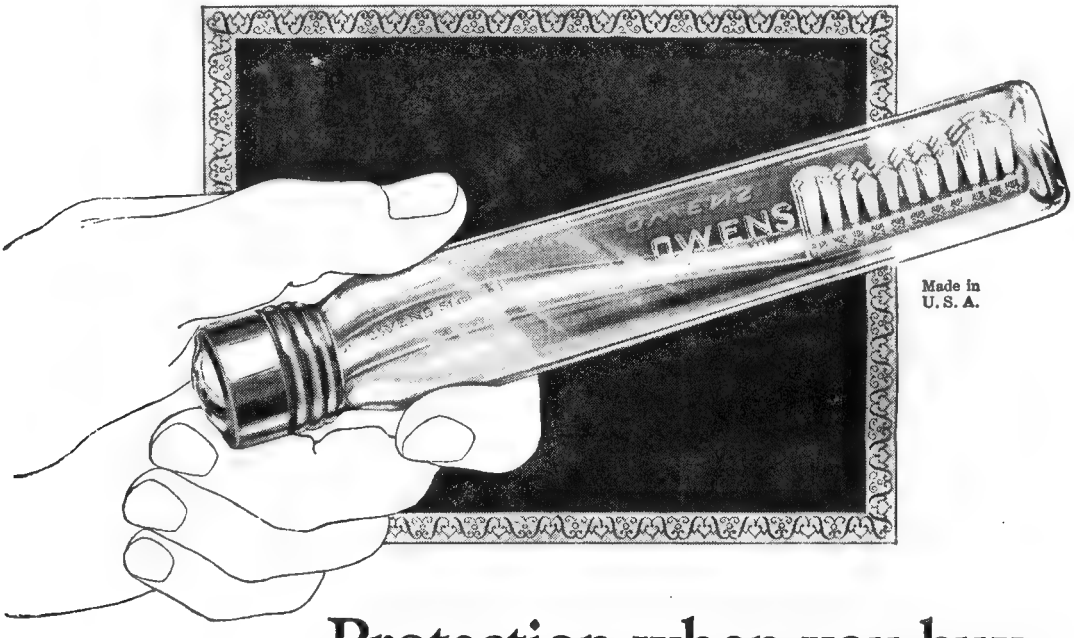
"Came a period of real worry; of haphazard living; of irregular sleep and diet. The result . . . a distressing case of nerves . . . misery from my digestive system, a rough and unclear skin. When someone suggested yeast I laughed. . . . Secretly I tried it, and now, knowing how simple the remedy, I laugh at nerves, scorn a skin that is not smooth and clear, and find my digestive system a thing to be ignored."

(*Mrs. Betty Knight of Los Angeles, Calif.*)

Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink)

—before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat 2 or 3 cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain. Fleischmann's Yeast comes only in the tinfoil package—it cannot be purchased in tablet form. *All grocers have it.* Start eating it today! A few days' supply will keep as well in *your* ice box as in the grocer's. Write us for further information or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-4, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



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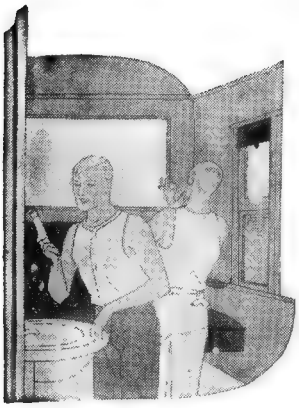

EVERY Owens Staple-tied Tooth Brush is sold in a strong, clean, transparent glass container. It protects your Owens from careless thumbing and handling in the druggist's store. It also makes a wonderfully convenient, sanitary container for traveling.

You'll prefer using this clean tooth brush! Many dentists have declared it to be the finest ever designed for the correct care of the teeth! The trim is shaped to clean every part of your teeth thoroughly. Bristle tufts are wide-spaced and wedge-shaped to reach every crack and crevice. The softly curved handle makes correct brushing easier and more natural.

Each bristle tuft is permanently tied into the handle by a hidden staple. Handles are in six distinctive colors—one for you personally.

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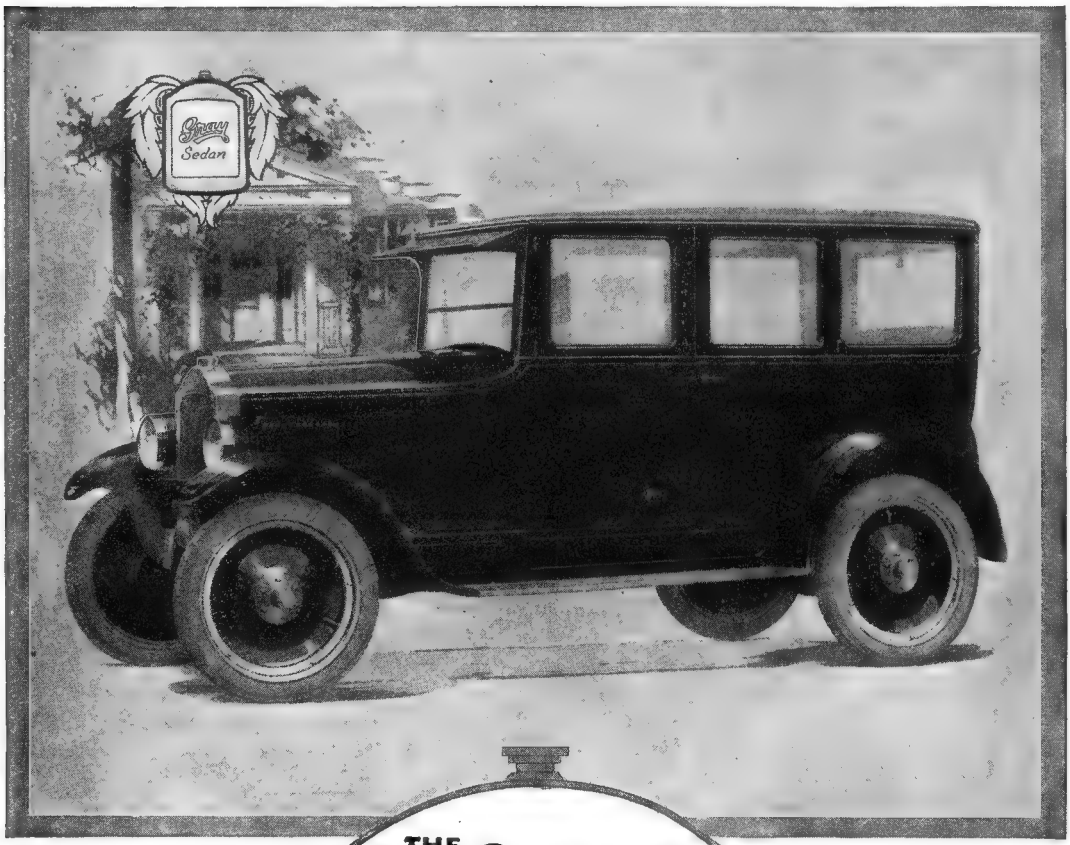

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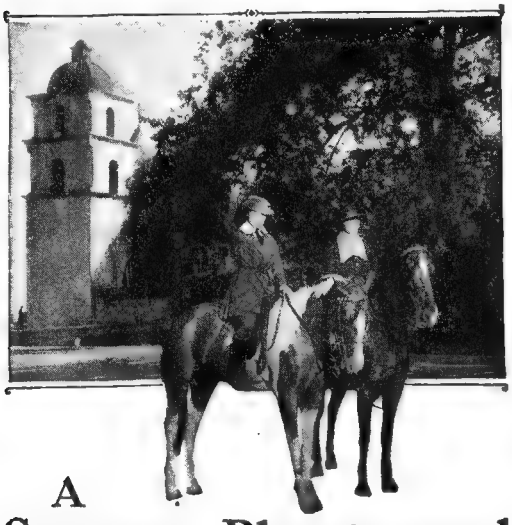

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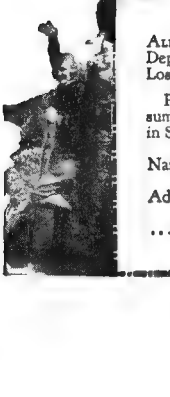

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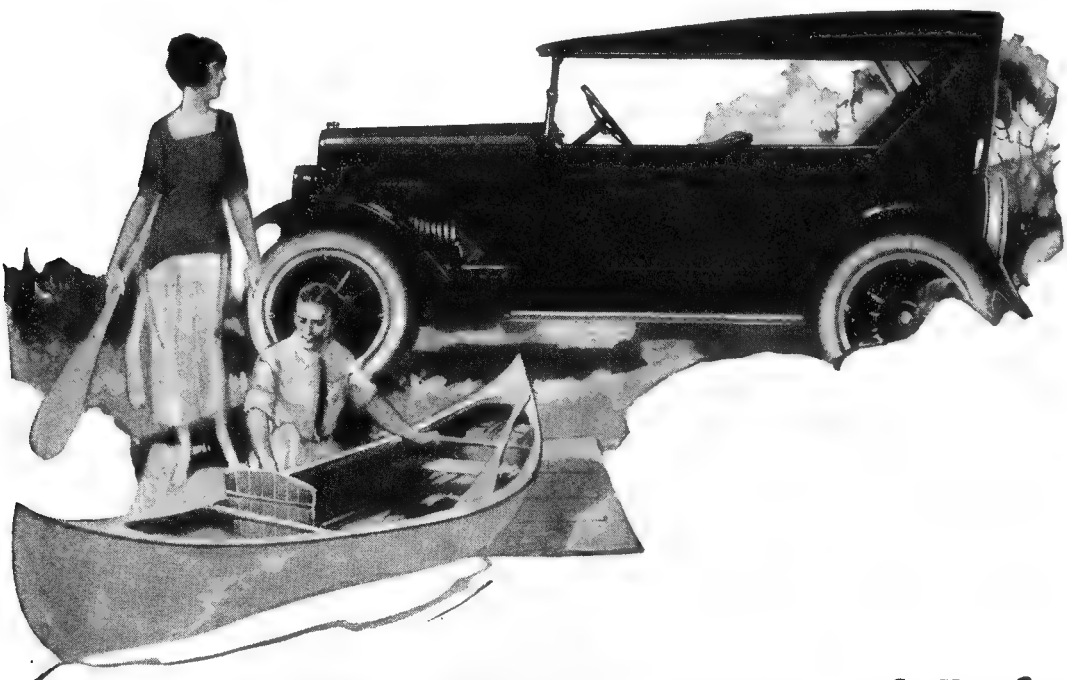

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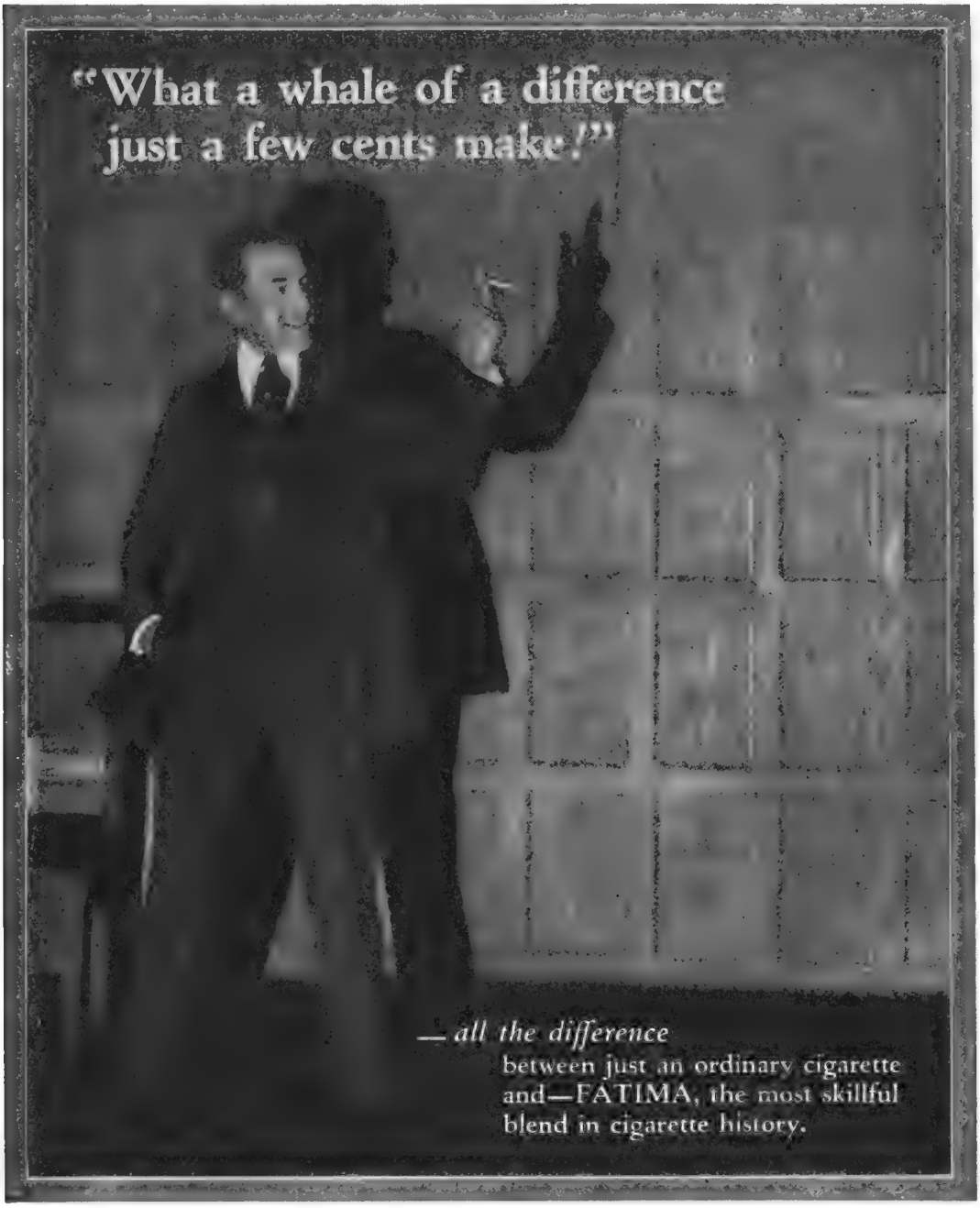
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Keeps EYES
Clear, Bright and Beautiful
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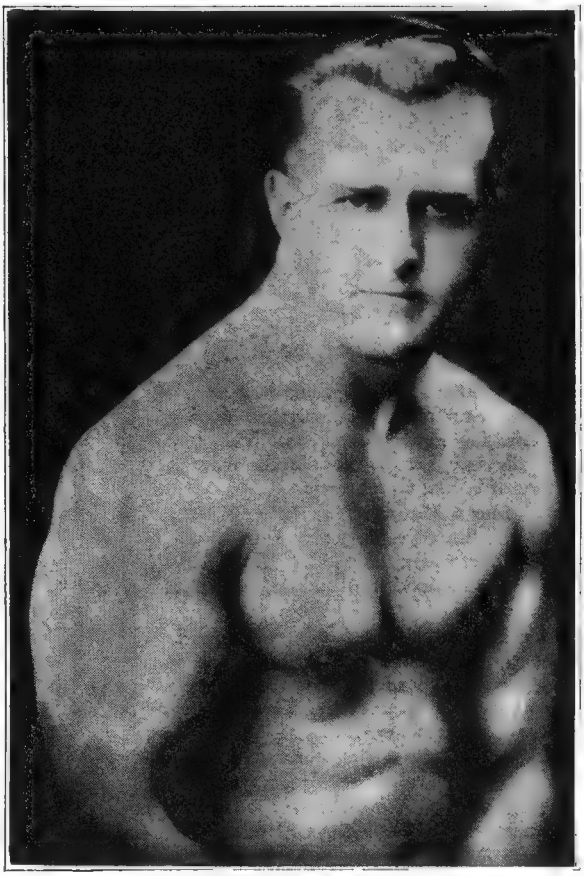
Does The Socket Chafe Your Stump?
If so, you are NOT wearing
Buchstein's Vulcanized Fiber Limb
which is soothing to your stump, cool, neat, light, walls not much thicker than a silver dollar, strong.
Guaranteed 5 Years.
Sold on easy payments to good people. Send for Catalog today.
E. Buchstein Co., 610 3rd Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

The Muscle Builder

Show me the man who doesn't want muscle, with abounding health, and I'll show you a man who is ready to be measured for a wooden box—he's dead and he doesn't know it. A body without muscle is like a house without foundation—a little storm, and over it goes.

Get wise, fellows, I shouldn't have to tell you these things. You can't enjoy life with a weak, sickly body. There is no pleasure like the feeling of health and strength. And when I say strength, I don't mean any half-way business. Do it right, or forget it.



Earle E. Liederman
America's Leading Director of Physical Education

The Whole Works

I build muscle—good, big, solid muscle. Let other fellows knock this idea if they want. I know what I'm doing and I guarantee *you'll like it.* I'll put an arm on you that can be made pliable one second and bulge out hard as steel the next. An arm that will be equally useful in weight lifting and any kind of skilful athletics. Just for a starter, I'll increase the size of that arm at least one full inch in the first 30 days. I'll put a chest on you to be proud of. A full, deep chest with a pair of lungs that will take a man-sized load of rich oxygen with every breath, and you know what that means. Your lungs feed your blood, shooting a kick through your veins that will make you just bubble over with vitality. I will build up those inner muscles around your heart and every vital organ. I will send a thrill up your old spinal column that will make you feel like tackling a wildcat.

A New Body in 90 Days

Some wise crackers say it takes years to put a man in shape. That's because they don't know any better. I want just 90 days and I'll change your body so you won't recognize yourself. By that time every muscle in your anatomy will literally bulge out. And what's more your whole being will just tingle with excitement. You will have a spring to your step and a flash to your eye that will radiate personality wherever you go. You will feel like shouting: "I'm a man—and I can prove it."

Come on now, fellows! Why waste more time? I'm not just promising these things. I guarantee them. If you doubt me, make me prove it. Are you ready? Let's go!

Send for My New 64-page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It is Free

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send today—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5005, 305 Broadway, New York City

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5005, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents, for which you are to send me, without obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name.....

Street.....

City..... State.....

(Please write or print plainly)

She is No Longer Fat

She found a way to reduce her fat. It was a way far more pleasant than dieting or exercising would have been. This new way allowed her to eat foods without danger of becoming fat again.

She found *Marmola Prescription Tablets*. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They help Nature to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

Marmola Prescription Tablets are made from the famous Marmola prescription. Thousands have found that these handy tablets give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

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283 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

FRECKLES

Don't Hide Them With a Veil; Remove Them With Othine—Double Strength

This preparation for the treatment of freckles is so successful in removing freckles and giving a clear, beautiful complexion that it is sold under guarantee to refund the money if it fails.

Don't hide your freckles under a veil; get an ounce of Othine and remove them. Even the first few applications should show a wonderful improvement, some of the lighter freckles vanishing entirely.

Be sure to ask the druggist for the double-strength Othine: it is this that is sold on the money-back guarantee.

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Mail us 20c with any size film for development and six prints, or send us six negatives, any size, and 20c for six prints. Trial 5x7 enlargement in handsome folder, 25c. Overnight Service.
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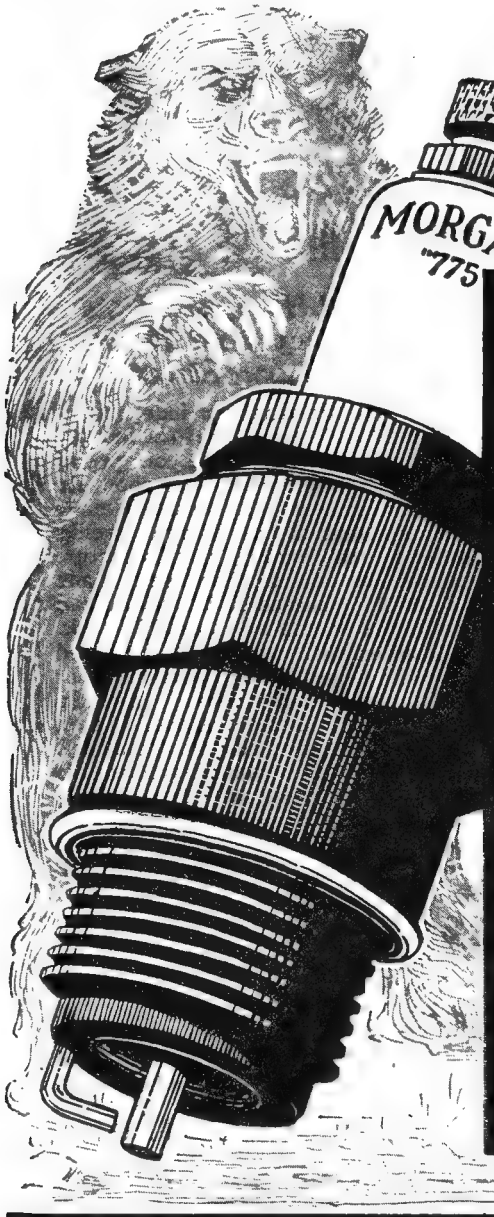

Makes All Gas High Test

A blast of withering heat at every firing! To Morganize your motor is to give it the heart of a charging grizzly bear. Surging power for every emergency. Clean cut ignition day in and day out. And you may buy your "gas" where you will.

A single point ignition plug made absolutely compression proof and otherwise refined to assure the BLAZE, the hottest ignition you can buy—and no extra cost for the extra power. Famous "775" Government Standard Porcelain used exclusively.

Guarantee

Every MORGAN BLAZE PLUG is guaranteed to the limit against defects of material or workmanship. Dealers and jobbers are authorized to make any necessary replacements.

If your dealer cannot supply you, write us giving his name and address also name and model of your car for a full set of BLAZE PLUGS. We will see that you get them.

Manufacturer's Agents—Write for Proposition.

MORGAN MANUFACTURING CO., INC.
Keene, New Hampshire,
U. S. A.

MORGAN
BLAZE PLUG

Famous Nestle LANOIL Home Outfit for Permanent Waving

PRICE $15

Waved Six Months Before This Photo

"My hair was very fine, straight and dry. The waving was a success from the very beginning. In rainy or damp weather it curls around my face just as though it were naturally curly," writes MISS MARJORIE MACDONALD, 1049 Goodrich Ave., St. Paul, Minn.

WHY do you continue to struggle daily with your straight, dull hair that is so hard to manage, and so difficult to arrange, when a single application of the famous Nestle LANOIL Home Outfit will give you gloriously natural curly hair that water, perspiration, rain, and shampoos will only make curlier and wavier?

In 21 months, simply, safely and quickly, the Outfit has brought radiant joy and happiness to over 190,000 homes. Letters from our customers are brimful of gratitude for their new luxuriant, soft and lovely, lasting waves, curls and ringlets. Entire families get naturally curly hair with a single Outfit. "*I* only wish I had known of its merits sooner," writes Miss Helen Loveless, of Washington, D. C. And *we* wish we had the space to publish ALL the charming photos and testimonials they send us.

If *you* wish, we will send you our free booklet, containing these, with further explanations of the Outfit, but as we are glad to send you the Home Outfit *on 30 days' free trial*, why not write for it directly. Wave your hair with the free trial materials. Then wait. Wash, brush, comb, *test* your lovely, soft, silky-bright waves and curls in every way you see fit, and if they do not look and act like naturally curly hair, if they do not become prettier every day, return the Outfit within 30 days, and every cent of its cost of $15 deposited with us or with your postman will be refunded immediately.

Send the coupon below, or a letter, or a postal *today*, and let the Home Outfit relieve you of your straight hair troubles *for all the summer months to come.*

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Established 1905
12 and 14 East 49th Street, New York City
Just off Fifth Avenue

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Please send me the Nestle LANOIL Home Outfit for Permanent Waving. I understand that if, after using the Outfit and the free trial materials, I am not satisfied, I may return the Outfit any time within 30 days, and receive back every cent of its cost of $15.

☐ I enclose $15 in check, money order, or bank draft as a deposit.
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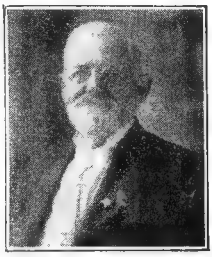
OR, check HERE.....if only free booklet of further particulars is desired.

Name.....

Street.....

City..... *State*.....

THIS MAN DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE BOSS TO RAISE HIM



He Turned His Spare Time Into Money And Now He Is On Easy Street

Wouldn't you like to have an independent income? Wouldn't you like to be in a position where you could raise your pay at will, without going to the boss about it?

A. B. Arment is his own boss. He made sure of his position and income, twenty years ago. In sending us this picture of himself, he objected because it made him look old, whereas he is only 81 and going just as strong as ever in his work.

In past years, when Mr. Arment wanted a raise, he would work a little harder and the extra money would be forthcoming. Now, of course, he doesn't look for raises. He doesn't have to. Through conscientious work he has developed his business to a point where a steady income is assured which is more than ample for his needs.

Wouldn't you like to get into a business like this?

There's A Place For You On Our Staff

Representatives are wanted at once, in every locality, to collect renewals and solicit new subscriptions for Physical Culture, True Story and the other popular Macfadden Publications. There's a place for you on our staff and a chance to make big money. Are you ambitious? Do you want to get ahead? Then, write us at once for details of our proposition. If more convenient, use the coupon below.

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Have you ever tried it this way?

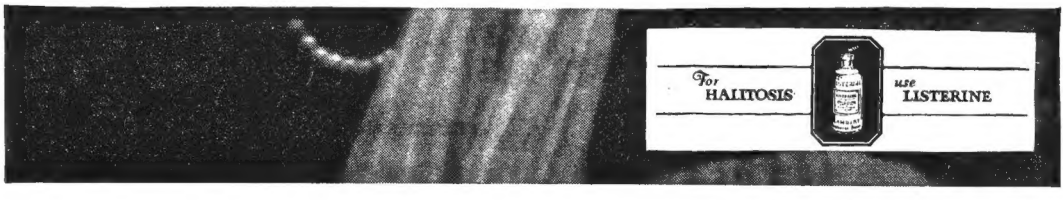
YOU know, of course, that Listerine has dozens of uses as a safe antiseptic. But do you know of its unusual properties as a safe, non-irritating deodorant?

Whenever you don't have time for a tub or shower, or when these are not accessible, simply try dousing on Listerine. See how cool, refreshed and clean it leaves you feeling.

And best of all, Listerine used this way as a deodorant cannot irritate or injure the most delicate skin. Rather, it is soothing, healing, evaporates quickly, and cannot stain garments. It is the ideal deodorant.

Try Listerine this way some afternoon when you feel hot and sticky after a game of tennis; or some day when you have just finished a hot afternoon's shopping; or when you are on a motor trip and it's miles between tubs; or when you are traveling and you miss the old shower 'way back home.

You will be delighted with the refreshing, exhilarating effect and you will pass this suggestion along to your friends.—*Lambert Pharmacal Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.*



The Enchanted Breakfast!

Here is lightness and brightness—food enchanted—in the form of a breakfast dish.

Grains of rice steam exploded to 8 times their normal size, crisp and flaky, more enticing than you ever dreamed a food could be.

All the nourishment of whole grains and the minerals. Quickly digested, assimilated—turned to strength and vigor in a few minutes.

Serve with sugar and cream. Or in bowls of milk. And for a special treat, a morning's adventure, try with fresh or cooked fruit.

Don't deny yourself this delight. Go today, ask your grocer for Quaker Puffed Rice—the supreme grain food.

At NIGHT—Puffed Wheat

Quaker Puffed Wheat—steam exploded like rice. Whole wheat in its most digestible form, containing the important body-building elements. Supplies the minerals and bran everybody needs. The milk, the vitamines.

Professor Anderson's Invention

Quaker Puffed Wheat and Puffed Rice are the famed inventions of Professor Anderson—food shot from guns—grain foods thoroughly cooked.

Quaker Puffed Rice

Quaker Puffed Wheat

Keep a Kodak story of the children

Autographic Kodaks *$6.50* up

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Roof shingles stained mottled tile Red.

Wall shingles stained weathered Gray.

Roof stained with Cabot's Creosote Stains. Walls and Chimney finished with Cabot's Old Virginia White. Charles A. Platt, Architect, New York.

Reliable Shingle Stains

Artistic and Durable Colors
Real Wood-Preservation

Cabot's Creosote Stains

The Genuine Creosote—wood-preserving—Outside Stains

The artistic coloring of modern houses dates from the invention of Cabot's Creosote Shingle Stains over forty years ago; and they have always been the standard stains. (Ask any architect or responsible dealer.)

Artistic Colors:—Being made of the finest and strongest pigments, ground in linseed oil, the colorings are rich and transparent and bring out the natural beauty of the wood. No "painty" effects.

Durable:—The colors are lasting—no colors can be more so—and they cannot crack or peel.

Preservative:—The liquid is genuine creosote "the best wood preservative known." No kerosene or benzine.

You are sure of Cabot's Stains. Why take chances? A poor stain wastes both stain and labor.

Cabot's Old Virginia White

The stain for white houses. As bright and clean as new whitewash and as durable as paint.

Cabot's Double-White

Whiter than white lead and has 50% more hiding power. Two coats equal to three of lead.

You can get Cabot's Stains all over the country. Send for samples of wood stained with moss-green, bungalow-brown, silver-gray, tile-red and many other shades, and name of nearest agent.

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Wall shingles stained weathered Gray.

Lattice frame stained Moss Green, Lattice finished with Cabot's Double White